

## Chapter THREE

# IRA & MINTIA'S STORY

## Part 1—Williams Hollow Through 1929



Ira Hartley  
about 5 years old.



Mintia Gunnels  
around 10 years old.

By the time Ira Hartley was born in 1889, his family had already been in the southern central Missouri area for half a century. (His grandfather, Andrew J. Hartley, migrated from middle Tennessee in 1839.) No doubt as a child Ira heard his parents, aunts and uncles talk about their experiences with the Civil War and the bushwhackers in the 1860s, the county seat feud in the 1870s, or the Baldknobbers of the 1880s. His near relatives had seen a lot of trouble.

Ira Hartley's place of birth was the Hartley family farm six miles east of Ava, MO, and less than two miles northwest of Arno. (point "A" on page 8 map). Ira was the 13th of 15 children born to William L. "Bill" and Sarah (Lakey) Hartley. He would live his entire life within 10 miles of his birthplace. Ira attended school at Arno which had been thriving since the 1870s long before his birth.

Mintia Gunnels was born at the Gunnels family farm a few miles southwest of the Hartley farm (point "B" on page 8 map). The closest school for her to attend would have been at Goodhope, a little west of her family's farm. Unlike the Hartley family, the Gunnels family were newcomers to the county around the time of Mintia's birth. They had moved from Camden County in central Missouri not long before Mintia's birth.

Ira and Mintia were married in November 13, 1910, at Goodhope by Mintia's great uncle, Ezra Johnson. They were each 21 years old. Their first child, Kiree, was born in September of the following year (1911). We know about the whereabouts of the couple during the earliest years through the oldest child, Kiree, having learned it first-hand from her mother, Mintia. Kiree relayed these stories to her son, Kenneth Brown, in taped interviews in the 1980s and 1990s.

Based on these interviews the following chronology of events can be determined for Ira and Mintia.

**1910-1913**—The couple rented the Upson Farm (point “C” on page 8 map) near the confluence of Cowskin and Beaver Creeks just a little west of Arno. Fred Upson, the owner, was the father-in-law of Ira’s brother, John Hartley, who had married Ethel Upson a couple of years earlier.

Kiree was born in this Upson cabin; the cabin had a room downstairs and a loft overhead. Mintia’s younger sister, Annie, was at the cabin when Kiree was being born. She said “Uncle Ira (Pronounced Are-ee by Aunt Annie) told me that they had a baby under the floor boards, and they were going to get it out!”

Kiree and her parents would live in the cabin until the fall of 1913. It was also here that Kiree was found eating a live lizard and “scaring all the older folks to death.”

Kiree’s first memory is at this place as well. In 1913, Ethel (Upton) Hartley, the wife of Ira’s brother, John, came to stay with them. John was off working in Kansas. But he never came back, and Kiree remembers Ethel and her little ones being disturbed, she felt.

**1914-15**—Ira and Mintia next rented the “Calvin Place” up by Pilot Knob School (point “D” on page 8 map) to the north in the fall months of 1913. Reportedly Ira and Mintia had a good crop year in 1914, and they had accumulated some things like a wagon, farm implements, and horses and cows as they began to build their life.

Things went well enough that Ira and Mintia bought the “Humphreys Farm” (point “E” on page 8 map) between the Gunnels family farm and Goodhope. Kiree said “a sawmill was moved in...” and Mintia’s brother, John Gunnels, helped Ira to build a two-room house for the Hartley couple.

It was a “fancy” house, not a log cabin;



Above, 1910—Mintia (Gunnels) & Ira Hartley.

Below, Ira and Mintia’s wedding picture, November 1910.





At left, Kiree (holding Eldon) with Lawrence ca 1920-21.

this house was built with sawed lumber and milled windows and doors. And Ira worked hard to finish it as a second child, Lawrence, was born at the new house in March 1915.

Next Ira and John built a second house just like the Hartley house for John Gunnels and his wife, Enola “Aunt Nolie.” After a house was finished for Uncle John, another room was added to the Hartley house.

**1917-18**—In August, Ira received a notice in the mail to take a physical for service in World War I. The notice really tore up Ira and Mintia. Kiree remembered her parents sitting on the porch steps crying. But not long afterward, Ira received an exemption letter probably because of his farming occupation and family size.

At some point, the couple sold the Humphreys place “... at a good profit,” and they moved in with Grandpa and Grandma Hartley up north of Arno. Kiree, by this time, was school age, and she attended the big Arno School that her dad and Hartley aunts and uncles had attended.

The year of 1918 was a bad one for Grandma Mintia’s brother, John Gunnels, and his family. Early in the year, his wife, Enola, died in childbirth along with the child. That left John Gunnels with three very small children (Leslie, Lester & Lorayne).

Reportedly John never really overcame his grief; when the influenza epidemic swept through the Ozarks later that year he was not strong enough to survive it. He died on November 17, 1918, leaving his three young children. The children then lived with their grandparents, Nick and Sarah Gunnels, until they were grown.



The Nick & Sarah Gunnels farm at the head of Eslick Hollow. Ira and Mintia’s “Humphreys Farm” was just over the hill to the left in this picture

**1919-20**—In 1919, Ira and Mintia purchased 80 acres up Williams Hollow near Arden. (See pages 28 and 29 for maps of the land parcels purchased plus a layout of the Williams Hollow farm.) The farm included good “bottom” land and had a nice spring that flows cold water to this very day. (Land records indicate that the farm had been homesteaded by Ira’s Uncle Marion Hartley, one of old Andrew Hartley’s boys. Then the place was owned by Uncle Marion’s daughter, Jane Hartley, and her



Gunnels - Hartley Families at a Spring near Goodhope - ca 1914  
Adults: Enola (Poyner) Gunnels holding Leslie, John Gunnels, Myrtie (Gunnels) Sanders, Ira Hartley, and Mintia (Gunnels) Hartley holding Kiree.  
Children: Lester Gunnels, and the Sanders children—Stella, Virgil, Elsie and Oscar.

first husband William Hammons.)

Also living nearby this Williams Hollow place was Jane and William's son and Ira's first cousin, Andy Hammons, a person whom Ira and Mintia's children remembered well. Uncle Andy's wife died in 1926, and a few months later he sold his forty acres to Ira and Mintia, making 120 acres total.

In 1919, Ira and Mintia moved into a cabin already on the property near the spot where they would later build a nice home. Reportedly, Ira worked hard to clean up the cabin making it suitable for Mintia to have their third child in early 1920. The closest school to the Williams Hollow place was at Flat Rock. First Kiree and then Lawrence attended school there.

A third child, Eldon, was born in this cabin in January, 1920. Some time after Eldon's birth, Ira "moved in a sawmill" to the Williams Hollow farm and sawed lumber and began construction of a really nice two-story home.



Above, Stone of Ira and Mintia's graves at Goodhope Cemetery. {Ed. note: Grandma Hartley's name on the stone was spelled "Minta" as it was on her obituary. On all legal papers, she used "Mintia".}

**1926-29**—The last child, Dochia Levon, was born in the new house in August 1926. She was born right when everything had been going so well for Ira and Mintia.

Kiree, recalls the Williams Hollow farm as being successful at the time, and the Hartleys were considered leaders in the community. When radio came into existence, a sales company placed one at the Hartley home, and all the neighbors would come in on Saturday nights to listen (one at a time) to it. It had a head set, no speaker. Kiree lamented that she hardly ever got a turn to listen.

Ira and Mintia had a "molasses mill." All the neighbors would bring their sorghum molasses cane to the Hartley farm during the early fall to have the molasses juice squeezed out of the cane. Then the juice was boiled and strained to render the pure sorghum molasses.

Kiree recalls when her father, Ira, got sick to where he could no longer work the farm. It was a sad time. He died in October 1929 at the young age of 40. While his passing created great hardship on the Hartley family, Mintia and her children were able to operate the Williams Hollow farm for another 25 years. The story for Mintia and her kids after Ira's death continues in Part 2 (Chapter 4).

At right, 1926—Ira and Mintia Hartley family  
L-R: Ira, Eldon (in front), Mintia (pregnant with Levon), Lawrence (in front) and Kiree.



At right, Grandpa Ira Hartley with his team and wagon at the Williams Hollow farm.



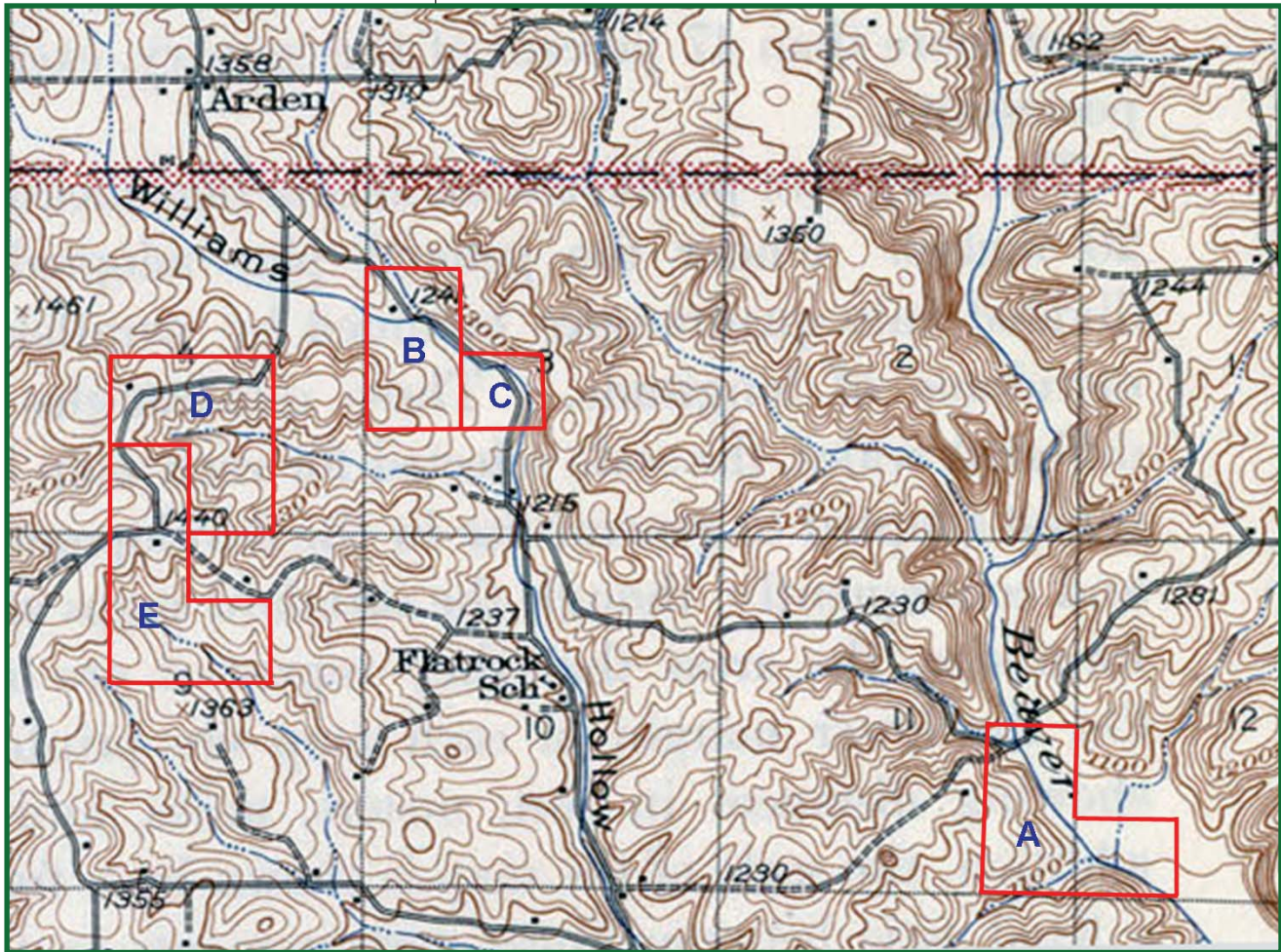
At left, Williams Hollow farm house as originally built with two dormer windows in the upper story. These were rebuilt in the 1940s, and a bay window was built on the south (left side of the house) to replace the single window show above.



At left, looking east from the Williams Hollow farm house. A road ran between the yard and the split rail fence.

## Williams Hollow Area in 1943 Showing Hartley Parcels of Land

This 1943 topographic map shows changes in elevation. It also shows occupied structures as little black squares. The white areas along the creeks represent “bottom land” well suited for crops.



- PARCEL A -- The original 120-acre homestead (#31208) of William L. Hartley, Grandpa Ira’s father. It was “proved-up” and granted to him on July 15, 1878. Grandpa Ira was born and raised on this farm.
- PARCEL B -- The original 120-acre farm that Grandpa Ira and Grandma Mintia Hartley purchased on October 16, 1919, from John Denney for \$2,350.
- PARCEL C -- Additional 40 acres purchased by Grandpa Ira and Grandma Mintia Hartley on May 5, 1926, from Ira’s first cousin, Andrew.J. Hammons. “Uncle Andy” as he was called by Ira’s children, was a son of Ira’s Aunt Jane (Hartley) Hammons Ratledge.
- PARCEL D -- 120 acres that Grandma Mintia Hartley purchased from the Wilson family. The black square in the upper left corner of Parcel D represents the small house in which Lawrence’s boy, Johnny, was born in 1950. It was also the house in which Williams Hollow hired-hand, Grant Hampton, died in 1961.
- PARCEL E -- like Parcel D, this parcel was owned by the Wilson family. Although not confirmed at the time of this writing, Grandma Mintia Hartley is believed to have owned this land as well. It would make her total holdings at 400 acres at one time.

## Williams Hollow Farm in 1950



The above illustration shows where the roads, creeks, structures and land uses of the Williams Hollow farm as recalled by Kiree (Hartley) Brown's son, Kenneth, from when he was a child in the early 1950s. This area is an enlargement of the top 40 acres of Parcel B shown on the facing page.