

## Chapter FOUR

# IRA & MINTIA'S STORY

## Part 2—Williams Hollow After 1929



Ira Hartley died of “consumption” in October 1929 before his fortieth birthday. It was a month short of what would have been his 19th anniversary with Mintia. Left behind were his wife; 18-year-old, Kiree; 14-year-old Lawrence; 9-year-old Eldon, and 3-year-old Levon.

Mintia and her kids continued on as best they could to run the Williams Hollow farm. Up the road at Dogwood lived the Clarence and Pansy Breedlove family. In 1930, Clarence’s brother, Charley Breedlove, his wife and children, were all living down in Mission City, Oklahoma, near Seminole. On May 10th of that year Charley was working the oil fields when a storm came up at the place where the family was living. The unthinkable happened. Charley’s wife, Virgie, and the children (along with members of another family) headed into a storm shelter. The cellar was filled with natural gas (odorless in its original form), and someone lit a match. The explosion claimed seven lives including Charley’s wife and three children, Martha, Dorothy and LeRoy. Even though the newspaper article at right indicated the entire Breedlove family was killed, in fact, a daughter, Pearl, was blown clear of the blast and survived,

Sometimes hope can grow out of despair. Charley (who originally was from the Fordland area east of Springfield) returned to Missouri with Pearl. Charley and Mintia were married on May 27, 1931, in Carthage, MO, and the two families merged at Grandma’s Williams Hollow farm. By all accounts, Charley was a good man. The two families got along well, and the Williams Hollow farm was doing well with sufficient farm labor. Charley quickly became little Levon’s daddy she never knew.



ca 1939-40—  
Mintia (Gunnels)  
Hartley Breedlove

THE OKLAHOMAN (Oklahoma City, OK)  
5/13/1930 TWO MORE DIE OF GAS BLAST (Tuesday)

Fatalities in Explosion In Seminole Storm Cellar Mounts to Seven.

Seminole, May 12—The death list in a storm cellar explosion near here last Saturday mounted to seven Monday when Martha Breedlove, 13 years old, and Mrs. Nellie Blakey died in a Seminole hospital. Five persons died shortly after the blast.

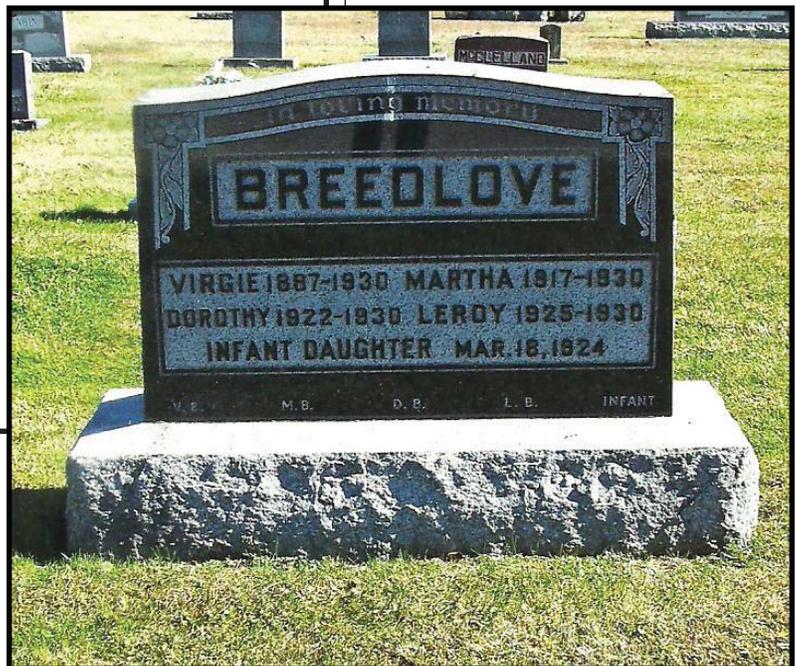
With the death of the girl, the entire Breedlove family, with the exception of the father, Charles Breedlove, perished. Mrs. Breedlove, and her five-year-old son, LeRoy, died soon after the blast and another daughter, Dorothy, 3 years old, died in a hospital Saturday night.

Others who lost their lives when the blast shot a tongue of flames from the cellar were Bonnie Edwards, 7 years old, and her brother, Sonny Boy, 5 years old. They were the children of Mr. and Mrs. R.L. Edwards.

The two families and Mrs. Blakey lived in the same house on a Gypsy Oil Co. lease near Mission City, four miles southwest of here. They had gone into the cellar to escape an approaching storm when one of the children lighted a match. Gas, which had accumulated in the cellar, exploded when the match was lighted. Cause of the gas in the cellar had not been determined.

Mr. and Mrs. Edwards had just started into the cellar when the explosion occurred and were burned slightly.

Below, in a Fordland, MO, cemetery, one stone identifies the graves of Charley Breedlove's first wife, Virgie, and four children. All show a death date of 1930 except an infant who died in 1924.





Above, Early 1930s—Pearl Breedlove, Mintia (Gunnels) Hartley Breedlove, Eldon Hartley, Charley Breedlove and Levon Hartley).

Below, Early 1930s—Lawrence Hartley & Charley Breedlove’s son, Bob, who was grown at the time of the Mission City, OK, explosion.



*{Flashback from Ken Brown: My mother, Kiree (Hartley) Brown, lived in the Hartley-Breedlove home until she married my dad, Orville, on February 14, 1932. She remembered Charley as being a good, hard-working, and kind man.*

*According to Mom, Charley had hired attorneys in Tulsa to prosecute for a settlement with the oil company where the cellar was located. The prospect of a settlement allowed Charley and Mintia to purchase new equipment for the farm on credit. The day arrived for Charley to return to Tulsa to meet with the attorneys.*

*What he learned was that his attorneys had “sold him out” and he would get nothing. The farm machinery had to be returned but the Williams Hollow farm survived. According to Mom, Charley said: “if I’d had a gun I would have shot them (the attorneys).”}*

*[Ed. Note: One who thinks such things didn’t happen has not read much on the Oklahoma legal system in the 1920s and 1930s—legal ethics were probably at their worst then.]*

One could say Charley’s bad luck never changed. He died on April 25, 1936, of pneumonia, at the age of 56. His body was taken back to Fordland, MO, to be buried close to Virgie and the children.

### **Who worked the Williams Hollow farm after Charley died?**

When Charley died, Mintia’s son, Lawrence, had turned 21, and Eldon was 16. Kiree and her husband, Orville, were living on a corn farm in Nebraska, and not available.

Grandma Hartley, herself, left the farm in the late 1930s, moved into Ava for a couple of years while her youngest daughter, Levon, went to high school. Grandma worked as a cook in an Ava cafe while they lived there.

Eldon turned 18 in 1938, enlisted in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and went to the CCC camp at Pond Fork in Ozark County several miles to the south of Williams Hollow. About the same time, Lawrence married a local girl, Leora Jones. They were married in

1937 but divorced in 1940. Lawrence left for Idaho to work there.

Eldon remained on the Williams Hollow farm, though, and his help was indispensable. Eldon married Verda Burluson on February 7, 1942, but was drafted and went into the military in September of the same year.

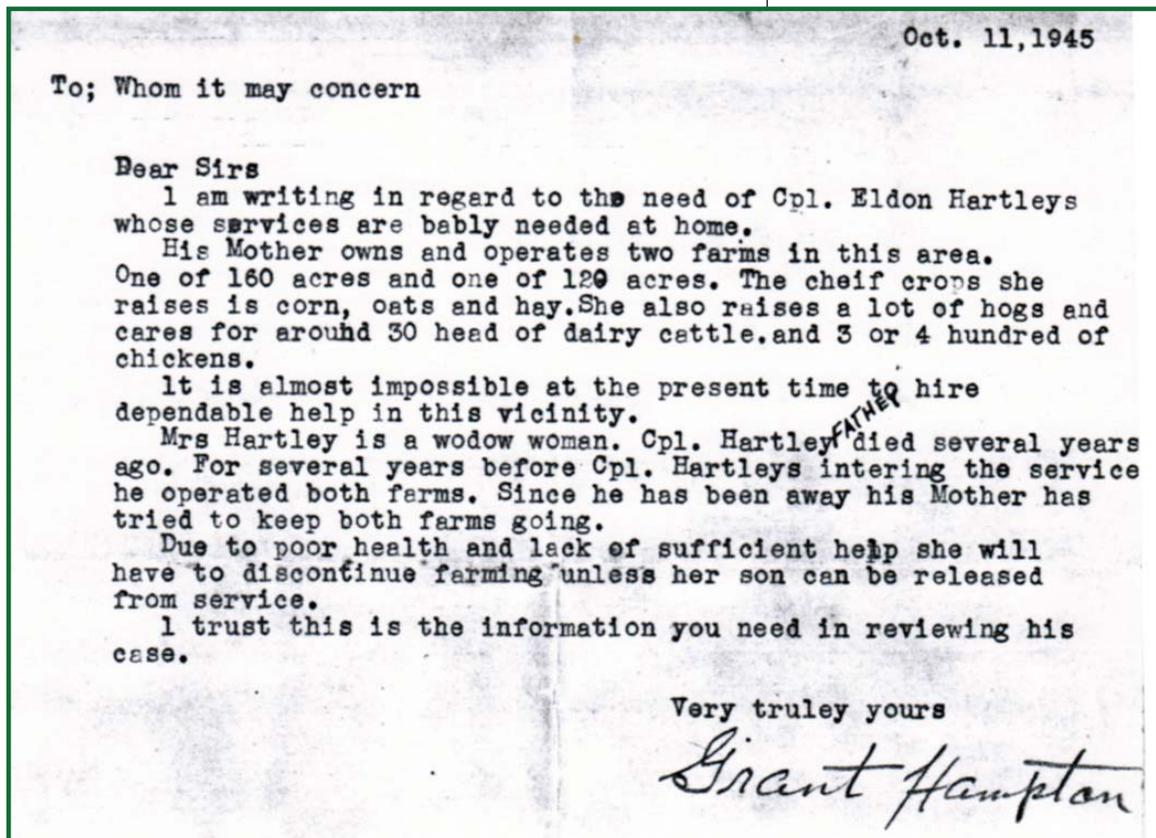
At some point, Mintia enlisted the help of Grant Hampton, as a hired hand. Grant Hampton, who many of us Hartley grandkids thought of as a member of the family, stayed on at the Williams Hollow farm until Mintia sold out in 1952 and moved into Ava.

Although Grandma Hartley and Grant operated the farm during his absence, Eldon was sorely needed. Below is a letter that Grant wrote asking that Eldon be released from the military to help on the farm. Eldon was released in 1946.

Once Eldon returned to Williams Hollow, the decision was made to build a house for him and his family on Grandma's "Upper Forty." Eldon and Verda, and their two sons, Raymond and Jerry, took up residence there so that Eldon could help with the farm.



Above, the Williams Hollow farm house in the 1940s shows a bay window on the left (south) and remodeled dormer windows in the attic.



## Grandma Hartley's Hired Hand, Grant Hampton—His Story



Above, Grant as a young man.



Above, ca 1953—Grant at Kiree's house in Ava MO.

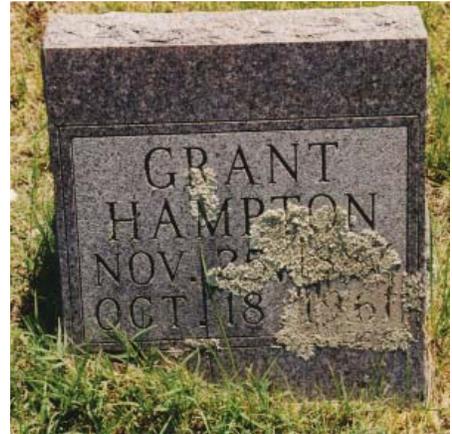
Any of the Hartley grandchildren old enough to remember the Williams Hollow farm would also remember Grant Hampton. Here's a little bit about Grant's life. According to his death certificate, Grant Hampton was born on November 25, 1891, in Taney County, MO. He was the son of Lewis Hampton (a blacksmith) and Millie Eslick; he was one of seven children. Grant grew up in the Ava area where his father had a blacksmith shop.

According to the 1920 census, Grant was living with his wife, Ina, in Oklahoma, where he worked in a glass factory. By 1930, he and Ina were living in Ava where Ina operated a beauty shop. At some point, Grant and Ina divorced without having any children.

Grant was Grandma's hired hand who helped keep the place going from around 1943 until Grandma closed the farm and moved to Ava in November 1952.

After the farm was sold, Grant continued to live in a little house on Grandma's "Upper Forty." Any time he came into Ava, Grant would go by and visit Grandma or her daughter, Kiree.

Grant died in Grandma's little house sometime in October, 1961, and his body wasn't discovered until Grandma's son, Lawrence Hartley, visiting from Wichita stopped by to say hello. The recorded date was October 18. Grant was buried in Fannon Cemetery south of Ava not far from the grave of his father, Lewis Hampton.



Grant's Stone at Fannon Cemetery.



Above right—1972—Grandma Hartley's small house on the "Upper Forty" where Grant died.

Until around 1950, Eldon and Verda lived in the new house built on the “upper forty.” Then Eldon took his family, first to the State of Washington and then to Wichita, KS, where he had obtained a job in the aircraft industry.

In 1949, Lawrence brought his family from California and stayed several months before moving to Wichita, to accept employment up there.

### **Mintia Gives Up Farming and Sells the Williams Hollow farm**

In November 1952, Mintia bought a house on the main north-south street of Ava (Jefferson St.), and moved into it. She kept the house until her death in 1981.

Mintia enjoyed her years living in Ava. Mintia’s house was directly across the street from the Ava Schools. Until a new high school building was built in 1960, she could sit on her front porch and look across the school grounds to the house of her daughter, Kiree (Hartley) Brown.



Above, 1942—Eldon Hartley & Grant Hampton at the Williams Hollow farm



At left—1958—Kiree (Hartley) Brown & Grandma Mintia Hartley in front of the house built for Eldon & Verda Hartley in the late 1940s. Kiree and her children lived in the house during the 1951-52 school year while she was teaching at the Dogwood School



Above, Grandma Hartley's house in Ava—ca 1980. In front are Randy & Scott Malo (Susan Hartley's children); and David, Marvin & Matthew Hartley (Edward Hartley's children).

For many years, Mintia rented out rooms to young women. Several of those women remember her as being the nicest person, and they have fond memories of their stay there. Like many people in Douglas County, these girls remembered Mintia as "Mrs. Breedlove." It was the name she kept for the rest of her life after her husband, Charley Breedlove, died in 1936.

Grandma Hartley's place in Ava had a nice front porch where one could sit and watch people go by. The house had a field stone foundation and may have been built around 1899 when the brick school was built across the street from the house. But the house has been refurbished over the years and still is in use today.

As she got older, Mintia spent time with her children in Wichita, often staying with her daughter, Levon, but visiting everyone. Eventually, Mintia required nursing home care. She was in a nursing home at Ava; but after a hospital stay at St. John's Hospital in Springfield, she was placed at Springfield's Maranatha Nursing Home run by the Assemblies of God Church. She died there on May 14, 1981, at the age of 92.



At right, May 1981—Mintia's children, Levon, Eldon, Lawrence and Kiree at Mintia's house after her funeral in Ava MO.



At left, ca 1970s—Mintia Hartley in her Ava home with Levon & Kiree standing and Lawrence seated on the left.



Above, ca 1960s—Eldon, Levon & Kiree on South Seneca near 47th Street in Wichita, KS. Kiree used to be a part-time server there.



Above, 1980—Mina Hartley, Scott Malo, Grandma Mintia Hartley, Lawrence Hartley and Randy Malo.



At right, 2014—Grandma Hartley's Ava House Still In Use.

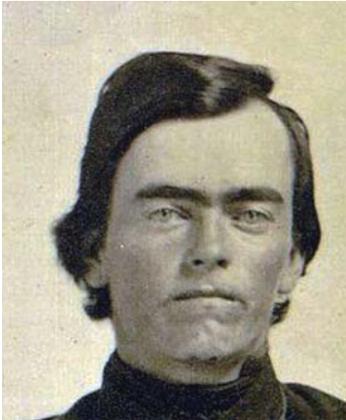
At right on Grandma Hartley's porch in Ava, MO—ca 1968  
L-R: Eldon, Stephen, Lawrence, Gary, Grandma Hartley and Verda.



Above, ca 1940s—Mintia (Gunnels) Hartley Breedlove, Kiree (Hartley) Brown, Lawrence Hartley, Eldon Hartley, and Levon (Hartley) Luttrell. The photo was taken the yard of the Williams Hollow farm house. The barn is in the background on the right.

Can you see the resemblances in the hairline, hair color, eyebrows and eyes? Many of us can.

a



b



c



d



e



f



## That HARTLEY Look Through the Generations

a—William Hartley  
(ca 1863)

b—Ira Hartley (1910)  
Son of William

c—Lawrence Hartley  
(1944) Son of  
Ira

d—Dayton Hartley  
(ca 1965)  
Son of Lawrence

e—Kiree (Hartley)  
Brown (ca 1920)  
Daughter of Ira

f—Dayna Hartley  
(1998) Daughter  
of Dayton