

## **Louisa (Aschenbrenner) Amberson (1875-1970)**

*A bride at fifteen ... a widow at thirty-two with nine children to raise*

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Louisa Aschenbrenner was just fifteen when she and Halvor Amberson were married on September 7, 1890 in Taylor County, Wisconsin. The groom was a 32-year-old widower, a man twice her age. At the time of their marriage, Halvor operated a store in Stetsonville, Taylor County.

Louisa was born on April 11, 1875 in Markt Eisenstein, Bohemia (now Železná Ruda, Czech Republic). She immigrated to the United States in 1877, at the age of two, with her parents, Georg and Monika (Bredl) Aschenbrenner and her one-year-old brother Edward. The Aschenbrenner family would make their home in northern Wisconsin. In 1880, they were living in Hamburg, WI, a farming community just down the road from Stetsonville. By 1895, they were living in Little Black, another community about three miles from Stetsonville.

Halvor was the son of Ole Amberson who had emigrated from Norway with his family and settled on a farm, also in Little Black, Taylor County, WI in 1880.

A year after their marriage, their first child Raymond was born (October of 1891). After that a new baby arrived every two years, until there were nine children in the family. The first four children were born in Stetsonville.

Sometime between 1897 and 1899 the family moved to southern California and Halvor went into the citrus business. They soon had a home at 1163 North Gordon Street in Pomona in Los Angeles County, surrounded by orange groves. (In the U.S. Census of 1900, Halvor is listed as a fruit grower living on North Gordon Street in Pomona.) Halvor joined a cooperative known at the time as the Southern California Fruit Exchange. In the late 1880s, citrus growers in southern California were organizing themselves into cooperatives. Their goal was to increase their profits by (1) increasing their efficiency in harvesting, packing and shipping the produce, (2) increasing their bargaining power with wholesalers and packers and (3) pooling their risks. The Southern California Fruit Exchange was formed in 1893 in Claremont, on the eastern border of Los Angeles County. Before long, the exchange expanded to include orchards and growers in nearby Pomona, as well as those in a number of other communities in Los Angeles and Ventura counties. By 1905, the organization had 5,000 members, or 45% of the California citrus industry; at this time it changed its name to the California Fruit Growers Exchange. In 1908, the cooperative underwent another name change, this time to Sunkist Growers, Inc., the name by which it is known today.

## Our Family History

Halvor died on December 2, 1907. The circumstances surrounding his death are unknown. However, at the age of thirty-two, Louisa was left a widow with a citrus business to manage and nine children to raise. Raymond, their oldest child, was just sixteen at the time. The youngest child was less than a year old.

Louisa never remarried. With the help of her children, Ray in particular, she continued to operate the citrus farm as part of Sunkist Growers and evidently made a success of it. Louisa and her children appear in the U.S. Census records of Pomona for 1910, 1920, 1930 and 1940. She is always listed as living in the home on North Gordon Street, with her occupation given as farmer. Louisa also appears in a number of Pomona City Directories between the years of 1912 and 1951. Life certainly could not have been easy for her. However, Louisa proved herself quite capable of raising a family of nine and keeping the citrus ranch in the family.

#	Name	Head	Sex	Age	Mar	Place of Birth	Place of Birth	Place of Birth	Occupation	Other
1	Amberson Louisa	Head	F	54	M	Germany	Norway	Germany	farmer	own farm
2	Ray H.	Son	M	27	S	Wisconsin	Norway	Germany	farmer	at home
3	Elta	Daughter	F	26	S	Wisconsin	Norway	Germany	stenographer	Office
4	William E.	Son	M	33	S	Wisconsin	Norway	Germany	tailor	Self-Edd
5	Esther	Daughter	F	27	S	Wisconsin	Norway	Germany	stenographer	Office
6	Viola	Daughter	F	25	S	California	Norway	Germany	teacher	Public school
7	Edna	Daughter	F	22	S	California	Norway	Germany	no name	

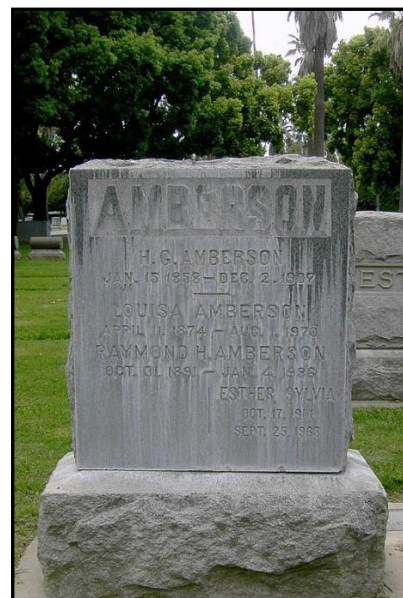
*Amberson family, as listed in the U.S. Census of 1930 for Pomona, Los Angeles County, CA.*

At various times over the years, Louisa's parents and siblings also made their home with her, if only temporarily. As the oldest child, she might well have been seen as the caretaker of the family. Or it might have been the beautiful sunny weather that drew her family to California, especially when compared with the winters of northern Wisconsin. Her sisters Margaret and Anna were living with her in the U.S. census of 1900. In their later years, Louisa's parents also spent time in southern California. In the 1930s, her brother George took the train from Wisconsin to Pomona to escape the harsh cold, bringing one or another of his children with him. George's son Robert recalled spending a few months with his Aunt Louisa while he attended a semester of high school in Pomona. A niece fondly remembered the crates of oranges Louisa sent at Christmas to her brother Lawrence in Wisconsin.

Louisa died on August 1, 1970 at the age of ninety-five and is buried in the Pomona Cemetery and Mausoleum. She shares a tombstone with her husband Halvor and two children: Raymond and Esther. All of her children grew to adulthood; five of them married.



*(L) Louisa with grandchildren, Florence and Nancy ; (R) Louisa's mother Monika with Margaret (daughter of Louisa's sister Anna) c. 1925*



*Amberson gravestone, Pomona Cemetery, Pomona, CA; Photo courtesy of Glenn & Tracy Morrow, Find-A-Grave.com.*

The children of Louisa (Aschenbrenner) and Halvor Amberson:

1. Raymond Hermann Amberson:  
Birth: October 31, 1891 in Stetsonville, WI  
Death: January 4, 1986 in Pomona, CA
2. Ella Louisa Amberson  
Birth: November 13, 1893 in Stetsonville, WI  
Death: December 5, 1986 in Los Angeles Co. CA
3. William Edward Amberson  
Birth: May 1895 in Stetsonville, Taylor Co. WI  
Marriage: July 4, 1935 in San Diego, CA  
Spouse: Rhea Lysle Merchant
4. Florence Monica Amberson  
Birth: August 10, 1897 in Stetsonville, WI  
Death: May 29, 1971 in Pomona, CA  
Spouse: Gerald Vincent Curran
5. George Halvor Amberson  
Birth: October 25, 1899 in Pomona, CA  
Marriage: About 1929  
Spouse: Lillian C.
6. Esther Sylvia Amberson  
Birth: October 17, 1901 in Pomona, CA  
Death: September 25, 1963 in Los Angeles Co. CA
7. Ruth Lillian Amberson  
Birth: October 6, 1903 in Pomona, CA  
Death: January 30, 1997 in Los Angeles Co. CA  
Marriage: June 28, 1927  
Spouse: Paul Talmadge Barnum
8. Violet Ann Amberson  
Birth: January 2, 1905 in Pomona, CA  
Death: December 8, 1996 in Fresno, CA  
Marriage: June 18, 1930 in Riverside, CA  
Spouse: George Samuel Gotobed
9. Edna M. Amberson  
Birth: May 17, 1907 in Pomona, CA  
Death: January 17, 1997 in Los Angeles Co. CA

Sources: Census records for Little Black, Taylor Co, WI and Pomona, Los Angeles, County, CA; Find-A-Grave.org; California Death Index, 1940-1997; Pomona City Directories, available at Ancestry.com; Paul Hefti, genealogical research investigator with the international probate research firm, Brandenburger & Davis; personal recollections of family members.