

A TWENTIETH CENTURY PIONEER  
SETTLEMENT: LATVIANS IN  
LINCOLN COUNTY, WISCONSIN

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As a result of the Displaced Persons' Act of 1948 and the Refugee Bill of 1950, 37,505 Latvian immigrants (11.1 per cent of all incoming Displaced Persons) were admitted to the United States between October of 1948 and March of 1952.<sup>1</sup> Of this number--which exceeded the total of all Latvian immigrants entering the United States between 1890 and 1945--close to 1500 came directly to Wisconsin under the sponsorship of denominational agencies or on assurances calling them for farming or related work. Soon after arrival, the new immigrants attempted to make contact not only with other Displaced Persons (DP's) in the state, but also with Latvians who were known to have immigrated to Wisconsin before World War I and established a settlement in the rural area near Merrill and Gleason in Lincoln County. Their attempts with the latter group, however, were invariably frustrated. It became quickly apparent to those who traveled up to Lincoln County to meet the earlier settlers and to seek their cooperation in establishing a state-wide Latvian Association that, even though the earlier settlers had managed to perpetuate Latvian language, customs and social organizations and to remain relatively isolated from the larger American community, they were clearly not interested either in making contact with the DP's, helping them in resettlement or sharing elements of their common Latvian heritage. In fact, many Latvians in the Lincoln County settlement openly viewed the DP's with animosity, a startling situation in view of the friendliness of other Wisconsin residents to the new settlers and the experience of other nationality groups in the state.<sup>2</sup>

The apparent disparity between earlier and newer Latvian immigrants to Wisconsin suggests several problems of interest to both sociologists and historians: How did this single Latvian settlement come to be established in rural Wisconsin? How did it later develop and change? Why have these earlier immigrants reacted with indifference or belligerence to recent Latvian resettlers? Since no historical or sociological study has yet been made of the Lincoln County settlement, this paper will attempt to answer the first two questions by presenting the results of nine years of research on the history of this Latvian colony<sup>3</sup> and to answer the third by drawing from this background to make a brief comparison of the earlier immigrants with postwar Latvian immigrants to Wisconsin, whose history and value orientations the writer has separately studied.

## LATVIAN IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT BEFORE WORLD WAR II

Prior to the last two decades of the nineteenth century, very few Latvians emigrated to North America.<sup>4</sup> By 1897, the number of Latvians in the United States was estimated to be about 1,000, and by 1900, 4,673.<sup>5</sup> Thereafter, until after World War II, Latvian immigration occurred in two waves, the smaller one prior to and during the 1904/1905 Russian-Japanese war and the second after the 1905/1906 revolution in Latvia and the Russian punitive expedition following it.<sup>6</sup> After 1906 and until 1949, Latvians came only singly or as family groups.

The areas of greatest settlement before and at the turn of the century were in the large cities of the East coast--Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York. There, also, the majority of the Latvian organizations were established, making the East coast the principal American Latvian social and cultural area until the beginning of Latvian resettlement under the DP/Refugee laws. After 1897, however, sizable numbers of Latvians--mostly single men--began arriving in northern Wisconsin, an estimated 1500 between 1901 and 1908, of whom about 500 remained to settle.<sup>7</sup> No other comparable rural settlement has ever been made by Latvians anywhere else in the United States. That Latvians ventured at all to come to remote Wisconsin was largely the result of recommendations by Boston Latvian leaders, who had heard that the area around the Town of Schley, Lincoln County, would be desirable for the establishment of a Latvian farm "colony."<sup>8</sup> Additional inducement was provided by lumber companies, advertising in the Latvian newspapers for men to come to clear the heavily forested area. Between 1908 and 1914 and after the war, very few additional settlers arrived, and none after 1922.

Of these Latvian immigrants arriving in Lincoln County prior to 1905, the majority had been poor farm workers in southwestern Latvia, out of touch with the nation's social and cultural center, Riga, and limited in their opportunities for improving their social and economic conditions. Those arriving after 1905, though slightly better educated, were also poor and in search of a better life. They differed, however, from the earlier group in their political convictions: having fled an oppressive Czaristic government and nobility, they associated the communistic element in the Soviet Union favorably with the resistance forces of which they themselves had originally been a part. They thus came to constitute a sizable faction in the community, variously termed the "socialists," "communists" or "nonbelievers," who grouped together, never joined the church, and criticized the Latvian nation for striving for and establishing independence.

All of the earliest immigrants experienced severe hardships during the first years of settlement. The period of most intensive farmland acquisition occurred between 1901 and 1906, before the cost of forested land rose beyond the means of most immigrants;<sup>9</sup> property size ranged between 10 and 120 acres. Since most of this land was covered by trees, tree stumps and

stones, farming had to be a sideline occupation until the land could be cleared and farm buildings erected, a task which many took ten years to complete. In the meantime, households derived their living primarily from the men's employment in the sawmills and from the sale of timber. Some women and children were even forced to maintain the primitive homestead alone throughout the winters while their husbands went to Chicago to find temporary jobs. As the timber industry declined, especially after the big forest fire of 1914, the population stabilized and farming became the dominant occupation. Any occupational or population shifts thereafter were the result of a) a number of single Latvian men arriving from Chicago during the depression and staying to buy farms, b) selling of farms because of lack of sufficient hands or because of retirement or death, and c) the returning to Latvia of small numbers of single men prior to or immediately after World War I. Eventually most Latvian farmers specialized in dairy farming, also expanding their corn, alfalfa and soy bean crops.

#### FAMILY STRUCTURE

While most early settlers had been single men, they gradually married or became part of the household of relatives or friends. However, in view of the lack of Latvian women in the area, it is not surprising that an estimated 25 per cent permanently remained bachelors. To secure wives, the men had to seek them primarily in other Latvian colonies in the country, chiefly Chicago, Michigan, Baltimore or Philadelphia, or, infrequently, among other nationality groups in the area. Less often, particularly because of the difficulty of the procedure, some men sent for and paid the way for women from Latvia, wives or fiancées who had been waiting for them to get established in the new country or women who had been their acquaintances in earlier times. None of the early settlers is known to have married an American. Perhaps because of relatively late marriages and the hardships of life throughout most of the first decade of settlement, families had few or no children; at least one quarter of the families were childless.<sup>10</sup>

Before World War I, opportunities for formal schooling in this forested area were very limited, nor were many of the Latvian families in a position to make use of even the few that existed. Of those children enabled to attend school, few continued for more than a couple of winters. With the exception of a Sunday School which served a smaller proportion of the children, no Latvian school ever existed in the area. As a consequence, the children's socializing experiences were almost completely within the family and with neighboring Latvian families, isolated from outsiders. Actually, the struggle to make a living took most of the time--daylight to sunset--preparing young Latvians well for the life of work, less well for life with people other than the family.

## RELIGION

Like the majority of Latvians in Latvia, the earliest immigrants to this area had been, or were, of the Evangelical Lutheran denomination, at least nominally. The initial settlers, soon after their arrival (1898), held religious services and began efforts to organize a congregation, which made its formal beginning in the year 1900. The congregation was formally established, a constitution was adopted,<sup>11</sup> officers were elected, duties were allocated and services were held in school halls and homes. Having received a gift of land in 1906, the congregation members pooled financial resources and work services to build a church in the Town of Schley, near the center of the area of the colony. While many physical hardships had to be overcome to bring this about, the goal appeared to be highly worthwhile, for the church promised to satisfy not only the people's religious needs but also to give an impetus for strengthening the integration of the community. Evidence of the pride they felt in their achievement is reflected in statements about the church on its fortieth anniversary, excerpts of which, translated, emerge as follows: "how much sweat it cost our fathers and the Latvian wood-stem breakers to get this church built. . . . God alone knows whether they would have let their sweat flow so freely, given their efforts, made their prayers, spent their time, if they had not been convinced that they were building for their children and all Latvian Lutherans here in America the first Latvian monument!"<sup>12</sup>

The church's capacity was about 200 people, and in the early years it often was utilized to the utmost. Although every baptized Latvian could be a full member, voting rights were held only by men over twenty-one years of age.<sup>13</sup> The church's activities mostly involved adults. Although the congregation attempted to maintain a Sunday School, infrequent church services and the difficulty of bringing children to church over long distances, particularly in winter time, added to the early collapse of this program. As a result, the second generation was relatively little exposed to the Latvian Church life and orientation, apart from baptism for many and communion for few. Information from the confirmation file further substantiates the decreasing participation of youth in the congregation life: confirmations were performed during eight years of the fourteen-year period (1900-1913) for only 37 persons. More successful than the youth program was the church's chorus, small in number, but composed of people who liked to sing, especially middle-aged Latvians. The chorus sang for religious services and other church events. While its activity was not regular, it persisted as long as it was led by its energetic first director. After he was gone, the chorus declined and ended its existence.

According to the records, eleven marriages were conducted in the period 1902 through 1914, at most two per year. Thereafter, only two more such ceremonies occurred (1934 and 1938). As indicated previously, many Latvians found and married their wives elsewhere, a practice partially explaining the decline of local ceremonies. Participation in communion was relatively

consistent, declining only in proportion to the decline of membership in general. The most frequently performed service in the church was burial ceremonies, 121 altogether, a service provided also for a smaller number of nonmember Latvians, the so-called "nonbelievers." Life spans were not short, however, the median being 72 years with no significant variations at any period.<sup>14</sup>

The arrangements for and participation in religious services constituted the main activity for the members. Arrangements entailed considerable efforts, particularly to obtain a pastor's service. Since no Latvian pastor lived anywhere nearby, most of those serving the congregation came from as far as Boston or at least Chicago. Since the congregation could not frequently afford to pay traveling expenses, pastor-conducted services were as few as two a year and never more than nine. In turn, this situation was discouraging to the pastors, none of whom persisted very many years. Altogether, the church was alternately served by seven Latvian-speaking pastors. Even though these pastors were difficult to secure, the congregation seldom resorted to inviting available non-Latvian pastors in the neighboring parishes except in instances of pressing need. In the absence of pastors, the congregation held services led by lay readers, the frequency of such services for most of its years of active existence being once every one or two months. Thus, most of the worship as well as other church activity transpired without outside participation.

An important activity for the congregation was its meetings, held from one to five times most years. The most recurrent items on the agenda were the balancing of expenses with income and the securing of a pastor. Almost all of the money spent went for the maintenance of the church building and for the pastors' salaries. Most of the time, the sale of logs and pulp wood, dues, offering money and gifts (in that order) constituted the congregation's income. Securing the members' dues was hardest, and, regardless of specific rulings and admonitions, collections were never fully made. Particular sanctions were never applied against the defaulting members since close personal relations would not permit this.

Three issues handled by the congregation are worthy of note. The earliest (1906) was the banning of Estonians from the church, even though they had been permitted to share the congregations' facilities in the first six years of its existence. The favorable attitudes toward this small group of a neighboring nation and fellow Lutherans in the area were soon superseded by dissensions and conflicts on the just sharing in the work of church building and financial maintenance.<sup>15</sup> The second issue involved relations with nonbelievers, a small number of whom requested use of the church for funeral services and for whom the outermost edge of the cemetery had been set aside for interment. For the first eleven years of the church's existence, the corpses of nonbelievers had been carried into the church and the church bell rung for their funerals. Prompted by the frequent a-religious funeral orations delivered at the nonbelievers' graves, the congregation voted in 1912 to forbid

them further use of the church for their services. The third, and perhaps greatest, crisis appears to have taken place during the period of service of the second pastor (1910-1912). In the words of an active member of that period:

He had gone to school in this country, and he broke our congregation to pieces! He put dues upon us--you must pay so-and-so much--and you see, the people all were not agreeing to it. They said: "I shall pay what I shall be able to; If I shall earn more, I shall give more; and if I shan't be able, I shan't pay at all." Then started the trouble with [the] cemetery: those who did not pay were classified as pagans and they were buried in another corner of the churchyard as public people.<sup>16</sup>

After this pastor had "left" the congregation, its "pieces again reassembled," and the technique of handling church business on a friend-to-friend basis became prevalent as before. However, the relations between the church people and "nonbelievers" were adversely affected for all future dealings.

The peak years in the life of the congregation were from its inception until 1914, in which year major forestry operation terminated in the area, compelling many Latvian lumbermen to leave in search of other work. The remaining membership decreased only gradually, mainly through deaths. From time to time the ladies' committee of the congregation arranged picnics and other social gatherings, mostly in homes or elsewhere away from the church grounds, and these activities appear to have been helpful in stimulating congregational interest and unity. Church activities, other than baptisms, confirmations and marriages, remained generally on an even level up until the fortieth anniversary of the congregation (1938), whereafter they declined more evidently, especially in the number of religious services held and the extent of participation. In 1948, after three years of almost complete passivity, the congregation called a Latvian pastor for two final weeks. Thereafter the church doors were never opened again for a religious service. Unused for over a decade, the building increasingly fell prey to vandals and was bought and dismantled by a Latvian farmer in 1961; its bell had earlier been installed in a new Latvian immigrants' church in Minneapolis. The residue of the congregation's treasury (\$1500) was designated for the upkeep of the cemetery as supervised by three trustees.

#### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Prior to 1905, the immigrants characterized themselves as living together "very lovingly."<sup>17</sup> After 1906, however, this harmony was considerably disrupted by the arrival of the "socialists." According to one old settler:

After the revolution, after 1906, then things started to go crazy! Then there were church upholders; there were baptists and social-democrats, and communists; and Latvians divided themselves into some twenty parties. Then people derided each other, cussed, and fought each other in the tavern, until all the parties were extinguished and there was no longer a Latvian society.<sup>18</sup>

Despite this period of conflict, relations became somewhat more amiable once the "socialists" had established themselves more securely in the new life situation. They improved even more after 1914, when several leading "socialists" left the area. On the whole, however, these later immigrants associated more regularly among themselves and maintained their socialistic outlook persistently and contentiously, occasionally meeting with like-minded Chicago Latvians, who helped them arrange local political lectures, propaganda films (after 1945), and even a few theatre performances. Through this tie, the "socialists" had more outside contacts with other fellow nationals than did any other groups in the colony.

Despite such activities, it is apparent that the "socialists" actually had very limited access to news from the world and that their political orientation largely remained that with which they had arrived in America. Their major source of news, the increasingly leftist Boston Latvian newspaper Amerikas Latvietis, gave at best secondary and quite scattered material on the trends in politics and economics and dealt mostly with Latvian life in the United States. Even after World War II, few households subscribed to any local or state-wide newspaper, nor did the settlers find time for much bookreading. They were also out of touch with Latvians in Latvia, nor would they have found many in independent Latvia sharing their particular brand of "socialistic" or "communistic" orientation.<sup>19</sup> Except on one occasion during World War II, when they gathered and sent clothing and other goods for the use of Soviet agencies abroad, the "socialists" manifested their convictions only to the immediate Latvian community. Nevertheless, rumors about "Latvian communists" did bring in two FBI agents in 1952. The "socialists'" participation and power in the colony was so extensive, however, that other Latvians refused to testify about them to FBI investigators. Seen in perspective, the many conflicts over politics and religion appear to have united more than divided the community, especially since, as several settlers remarked, they made social relationships more spirited and interesting.

The Latvian Welfare Association, the first and only formal temporal group in the colony, was founded in 1905 with a membership of between sixty and seventy. However, its influence in the community was considerably greater than the membership size suggests. It functioned first as a planning group for recreational events, such as picnics, dances and traditional festivities, in which the entire community could participate. Festivities annually

observed were Midsummer's Night (John's Day, Jani, June 23/24), Whitsun Day, birthdays and namesdays. Although to a limited extent, traditional folk songs and ceremonials were retained for these events, particularly on John's Day. The Association also maintained a welfare fund, raised through membership dues, from which sick members were paid three dollars a week during illness. A third service performed through this organization was the dissemination of Latvian books from a common library collection, acquired mostly from the Latvian colonies in Boston and Philadelphia or Czaristic Latvia, and never filling more than a few shelves. Because too many people failed to return books, this loan service gradually broke down.

Except in affairs involving touchy political convictions, both socialist and nonsocialist Latvians shared extensively in the Association's activities. In fact, its most active chairman was a former revolutionary who had escaped from Latvia in 1906. The association held most of its activities in a summer hall located on County Trunk J, about one mile from Gleason. In 1931 the building was burned down, purportedly by an antagonistic "communist" who was never publicly accused of the deed. Once the hall was gone, "the people came together and decided that there was no use to struggle any more, as they were all old," a statement indicating the relative absence of youth to carry on the Association's activities. The meager funds remaining in the treasury were consequently divided up per capita among the members and the Association disbanded.

Although the Association had formally died, some of its functions were carried on by a small informal Latvian Ladies' circle, composed of women from both the church and socialistic faction, with major leaders coming mainly from the latter element. Their most emphasized purpose was "to maintain folk tradition," which they interpreted primarily to mean continuing to hold traditional festivities, with Latvian food and folk songs. They therefore were the major sponsors of the John's Day, Old Year's evening, Easter, birthday and namesday celebrations in the area. Playing cards, singing older Latvian songs, chatting and eating were the prevailing activities in the meetings. During and after World War II, the socialist element became even more dominant with the result that some sessions were also devoted to political discussion. However, even though they loudly criticized aspects of American government and deplored the fact that their sons had been drafted, they always ended their gatherings with the singing of "God Bless America." The women were especially helpful during emergencies, such as serious illnesses or deaths, and in aiding needy families. The "believers," however, totally rejected their help, wanting no part of "communist sympathizers."

No other organizations are reported to have existed in the colony, with the exception of a tiny Baptist group, whose life was brief and whose significance in the colony was negligible.

## AMERICANIZATION AND CHANGE

Some of the Latvians in the area acquired United States citizenship within ten to fifteen years after arrival in this country. Acquisition of American citizenship, however, did not coincide with Americanization. Since the community was so isolated and compact, with only Latvian farmers for many miles, the original immigrants continued to speak Latvian among themselves and with their children. Even during their period of work in the forests or sawmills, Latvians worked with men of other immigrant nationalities rather than with native Americans and communicated in a language mixture. Fighting among the lumbermen is reported to have been more prevalent than the establishment of permanent friendships. Neither were the Latvians eager to seek contacts with Estonians or Finns settled in adjacent areas in Lincoln County.

While many of the area Latvians would gladly have returned to Latvia during the hard early years, few did so, especially since so many had left illegally or participated in the revolution. By the end of World War I, roots had been sunk too deeply for many even to wish to return, and ties with the native homeland were completely broken. None of the immigrants read any of the newspapers and books that later came out of independent Latvia or followed developments in the new state. Furthermore, the general belief prevailed that the singular independence of the three Baltic countries could not long persist between the powers of Germany and the Soviet Union, the "two big dogs." The "socialists," who by then had turned more sympathetic toward the Soviets, helped to encourage this pessimistic outlook. The first and second generation Latvian immigrants therefore lived isolated not only from non-Latvian neighbors but from contacts with the developing independent Latvian state.

Between 1925 and 1940, however, the community became gradually less isolated, particularly as children stayed longer in American schools or left home to enter other occupations. The increased rate of remarriage after the death of first spouses also helped to promote English speaking in Latvian families. Since the choice of Latvian spouses was so restricted, a greater number married persons of another nationality, most often Estonians, Germans or Slovaks, and, in the instance of some second generation members, also native Americans. In most cases, English thereafter became an equal language, even though some spouses endeavored to acquire the language of the other nationality. Many older farmers also retired to Gleason or Merrill, where greater use of English was required.

World War II appears to mark the major turning point in the life of the community, particularly since many of the sons were drafted into service, more outsiders moved in to buy the farms as older Latvians died or retired, and improved living standards enabled somewhat more freedom for travel and self-improvement. The closing of the church, which had been the major rallying center for local Latvian activity, marked the end of formal

Latvian social organization in the area, except for the very small Ladies' Circle, which is still continuing to meet.

When DP resettlers first attempted in 1951 to make contact with the earlier immigrants, about 82 Latvian-speaking "colonists" and descendants (not including third generation) still lived in the area. About half of this number lived on farms, the rest in Gleason and Merrill, where they worked as semiskilled laborers or, in a few cases, in clerical or business-related work. With the exception of a few oldsters, all were American citizens. While children were required to do chores, they could and did attend schools as long as they chose and were not pressured to remain on the farm. Only five had gone on to obtain college or comparable education, and none of these had remained in the area. The second and third generation were observably harmonious. Even if living elsewhere, unmarried and married children flocked home for Christmas, Easter, weddings, wedding anniversaries and communions and maintained frequent correspondence with relatives. With rare exceptions, only English was spoken with and among the youngest generation. While increasingly more relatives were non-Latvians, only six people living within the area were married to non-Latvians and none of these had children.

General friendliness characterized the Latvian relations toward one another. No friendships had developed, however, between staunch "believers" and "communists," even into the third generation, though it must be noted that the "communists" had only two children living in the area. Relations with Americans were prevailingly nonpersonal and minimal compared with those with relatives and Latvians.

Activities involving greater numbers of Latvians from the colony were weddings, notable wedding anniversaries, communions, baptisms, funerals and John's Night. Guests were predominantly, though not exclusively, local Latvians or relatives and old immigrant friends from elsewhere. In such gatherings the first generation Latvians mostly talked with one another or with the second generation, predominantly in Latvian. Reminiscing about olden times was common among the "battle comrades," or, after more beer had been consumed, joining together with the second generation in singing certain old Latvian songs. The group ate and drank heartily at these festivities, though seldom using Latvian food and drink except on John's Night or occasionally in their daily diet.

#### RELATIONSHIPS WITH DP LATVIANS

None of the colony's Latvians undertook to sponsor Latvian DP's, to associate with them, or to aid them in settlement. One DP family which settled in Merrill in 1951 has met very rarely and only on an individual basis with other area Latvians. Of Latvian DP's in Wisconsin (95 per cent of whom live in southern Wisconsin, mostly in Milwaukee), only the writer and a Latvian pastor have developed any ties with the old Latvians. Several sources have

reported one episode in which visiting DP's were accused by some older "socialists" of being "fascists" for having fled the "workers' paradise." In response, the DP's wrote a letter offering to buy a one-way ticket to this "paradise" for anyone wishing to go. This episode served both to increase the antipathy of the "socialist-Communist" element toward Latvian exiles and to spread the conviction among DP's that the old Latvians were to be avoided as Soviet sympathizers. In only one instance have the old immigrants actually cooperated with the DP's--in 1958, when a Minneapolis DP Latvian congregation requested and was given the old church's bell. However, while the receivers perceived the bell as a symbol of the spirit of the early Latvian immigrants who had installed it, the givers considered it an object of no value with which they could painlessly part.

By drawing upon known knowledge about the recent Latvian settlers to Wisconsin,<sup>20</sup> it is possible to ascertain even more fully the reasons for the failure of old and new immigrants to establish a common basis for association. The DP settlers surely differed markedly from the earlier immigrants, as here described, in a number of significant respects, particularly in cultural background and in motives for and method of immigration. While the earlier settlers had been poor, from remote rural regions, and without more than elementary education, if that, the new settlers came primarily from urban centers, had had at least secondary education and represented all professional and other highly skilled levels. They had experienced life in independent Latvia as it had developed between 1918 and 1940 and were ardently nationalistic and anticommunistic as a result of the Soviet occupation of Latvia. Educated within the milieu of the Latvian culture and state, they carried into exile their strong national loyalty and zeal to preserve the Latvian culture in exile--its institutions, traditions, symbols, values. Unlike the old settlers, most of whom had emigrated individually, the new settlers had gone into exile en masse, about 7 per cent of the total Latvian population escaping either to Germany or Sweden between August and October of 1944. Actually, the exile population constituted a microcosm of the Latvian state, complete with social, political, economic, educational and other cultural leaders to re-establish an organizational system that could be successfully transplanted from the DP camp life of Germany and Austria to centers throughout the world. Where the old immigrants remained ingrained, rural, isolated and politically naive, the new Latvian immigrant chose to reside in larger urban centers and succeeded in establishing a network of state-wide and nation-wide adult and youth organizations to perpetuate Latvian culture.<sup>21</sup> Isolated so thoroughly until World War II from cultural and political developments in independent Latvia as well as the rest of the world, the old Latvian settlers lacked even a common basis for communication with the new immigrants, especially in the use of such terms as "Latvian," "Communist," "Socialist." The phenomenon is that their 1905-vintage cultural and political orientation had persisted so long without major modifications.

Since 1952 the Latvian orientation of the Lincoln County population has rapidly weakened, particularly because of old age and death. By 1963, only 54 members of the first and second generation immigrant families were living in the area. Of this number, 18 were single Latvians, five of whom resided in the local county home for the aged, and the rest members of family households, 18 in all. Five of the families were active in either of the two local American Lutheran churches and were informally termed "the believers." The remainder were either indifferent or "nonbelievers." While the "believers'" graves in the old cemetery have been maintained by relatives and the trustees, the "nonbelievers'" section has become overgrown with weeds and sunken in. A few Latvians have been buried in the cemetery since 1948, but the majority of the burials since then have been in the American cemetery near Gleason. The Ladies' Circle, reduced to fifteen members at most, has continued to hold several social meetings a year at one another's homes and to sponsor the annual John's Day celebration, the only organized Latvian festivity still held in the area. It appears only a matter of time before most traces of this twentieth century pioneer settlement will vanish altogether.

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Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Vernant, The Refugee in the Post-War World (New Haven, 1953), 497. The total number of Latvians in the United States in 1963, including the third generation, has been calculated to be about 90,000. Laiks, XV (March 6, 1963), 1.

<sup>2</sup> The earlier Norwegian, Polish and Lithuanian immigrants, in particular, have sought out and succeeded in integrating the post-World War II immigrants into their associational life.

<sup>3</sup> In view of the kind of data that could be secured, the present study concentrates primarily on social and cultural aspects of the community's history. The following sources were utilized to secure data: all preserved records of the Latvian Church: minutes (1900-1945), baptism, confirmation, wedding rosters (1900-1938); death records (1902-1962); church publications; Latvian and American newspapers, Latvian magazines; recorded individual interviews with 34 original settlers; participant-observation of people's everyday life and of some 15 group events; and miscellaneous sources, such as pictures and letters from earlier times, tombstone inscriptions. Other potentially promising sources in Latvian and English, such as libraries in Wisconsin and Chicago, were checked, yet revealed nothing. Since the church minutes, the only existing record maintained by any local Latvian organization, are most complete for 1900-1914, this period is more thoroughly documented than any other. Data are particularly scarce for the period from 1925 to 1940. It should be added that the writer's Latvian background and

knowledge of Latvian language and culture were essential for the accomplishment of this research, both to secure trust and to effect best possible utilization of primary materials and personal contacts.

<sup>4</sup> The first few ethnic Latvians came in 1640, followed by some more later in the seventeenth century after the Duchy of Courland lost the island of Tobago, its colony in the West Indies. No records have been found about any Latvians in the eighteenth century, but some Latvians are known to have participated in the "gold rush" in California in 1849 and some in the Civil War. (Absence of official U.S. immigrant registration records for most of this period and the practice until 1920, once immigration recording commenced, of registering Latvians as Russians, prevents precise assessment of Latvian immigration totals in this period.) Latvju Enciklopedija (Stockholm, 1952), 1243-1244.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 1245.

<sup>6</sup> This was a national movement in the Baltic lands, Moscow and St. Petersburg, directed first against the powerful landed nobility and secondly against the Russian administration, which sided with the nobility. Although not consistently led by any party, many of its participants identified this revolution as motivated by the ideology of the Social-Democrats. The power holders of the land organized a "punitive expedition" which crushed the revolt in more blood. As a consequence, a number of the more active participants attempted to escape persecution by seeking refuge in other countries.

<sup>7</sup> The estimate of 500 is conservative. The total number for whom names at least are known is 377, who were recorded as having been members of the Latvian church at some time. Many settlers, however, never joined the church or any other organization.

<sup>8</sup> The first notice was published in 1897 in Amerikas Vestnesis, the Latvian newspaper in the United States, which was published in Boston.

<sup>9</sup> The 40 acres of forested land belonging to the Latvian Church, which had cost \$250 in 1900, had risen to \$500 in value by 1907--a good indication of the sharp increase in land prices.

<sup>10</sup> According to the Latvian church christening files, the average annual number of christenings for the congregation was 5.1 in the years 1900-1913, the minimum being 1, the maximum 12. In this same period, 5 infants are known to have died prematurely, 6 before six months of age. Since these figures pertain to one third of the area families, it is safe to estimate that the total birth rate was low.

<sup>11</sup> Lincolnas Latv. Kolonijas Ev. Lut. Martin Lutera Draudzes Konstitucija (Boston, 1907). It was mostly copied from the constitution of the Boston Latvian Lutheran congregation. Throughout this document, strictness in Lutheran faith and rituals is emphasized and democratic rules for procedure are set down.

<sup>12</sup> As reprinted in Tilts, XXIII (Minneapolis, November, 1957), 17.

<sup>13</sup> A rule stemming from the church's formal membership in the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States.

<sup>14</sup> The mode is 80 years and the mean 56.2 years. This covers all known deaths of Latvians in the area (147) exclusive of infants who died before six months of age (7).

<sup>15</sup> A literal translation of the minutes recording this decision is as follows: "The Estonians wanted at first to take part in building the church with their labor. When the work started, they were asked to help with the building, but they didn't do it. Therefore, the Estonians are not with our congregation, but they are separate. The Congregation assembly decided that they do not belong to our congregation, but if they want to have the services of God in their Estonian language, then they must pay five dollars per year." As a result of this decision, Estonians separated from the Latvians and built a small church near Irma. The life story of their congregation is similar; it, too, has by now ceased to exist.

<sup>16</sup> From a tape-recorded interview with an old immigrant. According to church minutes, those who paid only \$3.00 for a grave were not permitted to carry their dead into the church or to have the bell rung. Resentment was considerable over this ruling which treated poor believers the same as "non-believers." The ruling was later rescinded.

<sup>17</sup> ". . . and as Latvians were good drinkers, then beer was brought, a barrel of herring, rye bread and harmonicas, and it was very fine." Tilts, XXIII (November, 1957), 20.

<sup>18</sup> Although this statement contains several exaggerations, it suggests the general extent of conflict. Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> At the time of the Soviet Union's illegal seizure of independent Latvia in 1940, in the entire country only a couple of hundred sympathizers turned out to greet the invading forces.

<sup>20</sup> The writer, since 1951, has pursued research on recent Latvian immigrants in Wisconsin as well as in larger settlements elsewhere in the United States. The findings on Wisconsin Latvians have been found to be representative for Latvians in the rest of the United States since World War II. See Juris Veidemanis, "Social Change: Major Value Systems of Latvians at Home, as Refugees, and as Immigrants" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1961), particularly II, Parts V, VI, and Ch. 40.

<sup>21</sup> In Milwaukee alone 32 various Latvian organizations continue to function effectively, drawing active participation of about 66 per cent of all 10 to 18-year-olds, and some 74 per cent of all adults. A Latvian school (elementary and part-secondary) has maintained steady enrollments. Ibid., 448-454, 665, 743.