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Finding Aid for the

Lucia Erins Lativan Americans of Grand Rapids Collection

Collection # 266

January 2009 version

Abstract

Lucia Erin's collection of information on the Grand Rapids, Michigan Latvian community began with a brief student paper in Dec. 1985, followed by a more lengthy paper in 1988. This collection includes those two papers, the 16 poster boards of photos created to accompany the 1988 paper, original and photocopied materials used for research, and copy negatives of additional research images.

Collection #: 266

Accession #: 1987.001

Donor: Lucia Erins

Span dates:

Processor: Rebecca Mayne, Aug. 2000; Tim Walsh, Feb. 2001

Size: 3 cu.ft.

Box Summary

Box	Contents	Box Type
1	Documents	slim
2	Ephemera & clippings	slim legal
3	Photo boards	3" OVE print

Biography

Lucia Virsis Erins, a native Latvian, was a displaced person herself following the second World War. She came to West Michigan during the Latvian immigration and sponsorship program.

After taking a class in Michigan History at Grand Valley State University in 1985, she began collecting and researching the history of Latvians in Grand Rapids. She produced a more elaborate version of her 1985 paper and amassed many documents, articles, and pictures of Latvian culture and Latvians in Grand Rapids.

Lucia Erins died in 1989 at the age of 64. Her husband Pavels died shortly thereafter. (*Grand Rapids Press* Sept. 2, 1989)

History

Latvia was an independent Baltic country (from 1920-1940) between Estonia and Lithuania until the Soviet takeover during the second World War. At this time many Latvians were placed in Displaced Persons camps created by the United Nations. These displaced persons were able to immigrate to the United States only if they had a U.S. citizen as a sponsor.

The first Latvian immigrants came to Kalamazoo in the late 1940s and early 1950s. A Displaced People's commission was established and headed by Dr. Robert J. McCandliss of Grand Rapids. Because of Dr. McCandliss' residence, many immigrants came to Grand Rapids. Once the Latvian immigrants had arrived, they formed parishes and a Latvian Association, whose first hall was located on Bridge St., before being later moved to Front St. Despite many hardships, in Latvia and in Grand Rapids, the Latvians were able to maintain their culture and to thrive in the United States.

The Grand Rapids Latvians continued to support the people of Latvia in their quest for independence through protests and demonstrations in Grand Rapids and across the United States. Many more immigrants were brought to Grand Rapids following the first wave of the 1940s and 1950s to avoid further Soviet persecution and socialist economic conditions. Eventually Latvia was reestablished as an independent nation following the Soviet coup and the Soviet defeat at Riga, the nation's capitol. In 1991 the nation was officially declared independent.

Scope and Content

The contents of the Lucia Erins collection document the Latvian immigration to Grand Rapids and the preservation of Latvian culture. The two papers by Lucia Erins follow Latvian history in Grand Rapids from the second World War up to the 1980s. The newspaper clippings and magazine articles illustrate the involvement of the Latvian community in the growth of Grand Rapids and the immigration itself. Much of the content refers to the creation and growth of the Latvian Association and local parishes, some of these documents are written in Latvian.

The contents of box 3, the 16 poster boards, illustrate the displacement of the Latvians during and after the second World War and the immigration to Grand Rapids. Many of the pictures deal with the growth of parishes and the creation of Camp Mezvidi, a Lutheran camp in Allegan County(see Appendix A).

Contents

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	<u>Description</u>
Documents by Lucia Erins		
1	1	The Latvian Americans of Grand Rapids / by Lucia Erins, 1988. (2)
1	1.5	+ another copy 00.[2300].1 6/5/2002
1	2	[Class paper, Dec. 18, 1985 / by Lucia Erins]
Original Documents in Latvian		
1	3	Various <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Brinuma Zalite” [Program] ● “Dangauvas Vanagu Apvieniba Grand Rapidu 1951-1976.” Grand Rapids Daugavas Vanagi Association. ● “Zila Putna Spalva” Bluebird’s Feather Grand Rapids Literary Club’s publication (1977) ● “Grand Rapidu Pensionarn Biedribas 10 Gadi 1974-1984” Grand Rapids and Vicinity Latvian Senior Citizens 10 year anniversary. (1974-1984)
1	4	“Grand Rapidu Latviesu Biedribas 25 Gadi” (1976) (2)
1	5	“Dziemsa Vairogs 1945-1970” (Shield of songs)[Concert Program]
1	6	“Kristiga Balss [the Christian Voice: the magazine of the Latvian Baptist Society], 53. Gads, Nr. 5, Majs, 1982” [serial]
1	7	“Grand Rapidu latviensu evangeliskas luteranu drandzes juancelta dievnama” Grand Rapids Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church dedication (1986)
1	8	“Atatari” (Reflections) Latvian Youth organization magazine. (1955) [no.13]
1	9	“Atstari” (Reflections) Latvian Youth organization magazine. (1960) [no.34]
1	10	“Sirojums” (Hiking) Boy and girl scout magazine. (1972)
Remembrances		
1	11	[Remembrance. Letterhead:”Robert J. McCandliss, M.D., 1891. St. John Road Seal Beach, California 90740”] Original
1	12	[Remembrance. Letterhead:”Robert J. McCandliss, M.D. 1891 St. John Road Seal Beach, California 90740”] Usage Photocopy
1	13	13 [Remembrance, unidentified] 3 typed pages

Correspondence

- 1 14 Jan. 29, 1974 Letter to Valenins Mezulis from Vice President Gerald Ford.
Photocopy
- 1 15 W.D. Frankforter (museum director) to Latvian community May 10, 1979.
Cover letter and list of volunteers and contributors

Ephemera

- 1 16 "Latvian Heritage Exhibition November 18 / February 18 1978-1979
Grand Rapids Public Museum" (exhibit brochure)
- 2 1 "Fifth District Folks Attend Inaguration" Original and photocopy (2)

Newspaper Clippings, Identified.

- 2 2 "Latvian DP'd Coming Here" **Grand Rapids Press** [April 16, 1949]
Clipping. Photocopy.
- 2 3 "Citizens of Freedom" **Grand Rapids Press** [April, 1955] Clipping.
Photocopy.
- 2 4 "Keep Old Customs Alive: Grand Rapids Latvians Recall Homeland in
Marking Independence Day" **Grand Rapids Press** Sunday, Nov.
17, 1963. Clipping. Photocopy.
- 2 5 "Just Looking: Latvian bakery is choice discovery" **Grand Rapids Press**,
Sunday, Feb. 21, 1971. Clipping. Photocopy.
- 2 6 "GR Doctor Had good Faith: Latvian Refugee Now a Success in U.S."
[**Grand Rapids Press**] Dec. 13, 1955. Clipping. Photocopy.
- 2 7 "Are Baltic states special?" [**the Plain Dealer**] Sept. 4, 1987. Clipping.
Photocopy.
- 2 8 "A bubble or three in the Baltic" **The Economist** Aug. 29, 1987. Clipping.
Photocopy.
- 2 9 **Latvian News Digest** Vol. 11, No. 3, Aug.1987
- 2 10 **Latvian News Digest** Vol. 11, No. 4 Oct. 1987
- 2 11 "Our Prayers Answered" **Grand Rapids Press** Jan. 3, 1950 (sa **Grand
Rapids Sampler** p.180)

Newspaper Clippings, Unidentified.

- 2 12 Clippings on cardboard with captions in Latvian [by Lucia Erins] and
Photocopies (8)
- 2 13 "Latviesu koklesun tautas dejas svinibas galvas pilseta" Clipping.
Photocopy
- 2 14 "Turns Carpenter to Aid DP's: VanLeeuwen Remodels Garage for
Latvians" [**Grand Rapids Herald**] Clipping. Photocopy.

Newspaper Clippings, Unidentified, continued ...

- 2 15 “Latvian Family Given Cozy Home in Remodeled Garage: ‘For This Moment Have We Prayed’ ” [Grand Rapids Herald] Clipping. Photocopy.
- 2 16 “Latvian Priest Chose Life of Solitude – Also Died Alone” Clipping. Photocopy.
- 2 17 “Keep Hope Alive” [Grand Rapids Press]
- 2 18 Various Grand Rapids Press clippings
- “DP’s Thank Community” Grand Rapids Press
 - “DP’s To Give Concert Here” Grand Rapids Press
 - “Receives World Scout Pin” Grand Rapids Press
- 2 19 List of copy negatives. No prints currently available.

Photo Display Boards

- 3 1 16 Boards each containing numerous images of Latvians or Latvian life in Grand Rapids, color and b&w.
- 3 2 Photos that have come loose from the boards above.
(2 to date, 4/2/2002, in standard folder)

Reference Sources

- These items added from a LH Vertical File transfer 6/5/2002.
- 2 20 Lydens. 7.18/49 “First group of displaced persons of Latvian nationality to come to the Grand Rapids area ... 4 typed sheets [photocopies] 00.[2300].2
- 2 19 Newspaper Clipping Citation card. “Latvians: Sturdy victims of a cruel century. GR Press, July 21, 1970.