



# Latvians in Michigan (Discovering the Peoples of Michigan)

*Silvija D. Meija*

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Latvians have contributed to the cultural mosaic and economy of Michigan far more than one might imagine. There are three large Latvian communities in Michigan—Kalamazoo, Detroit, and Grand Rapids—with several smaller enclaves elsewhere in the state. An underlying goal of Latvians who now live in Michigan, as well as other parts of the United States and Canada, is to maintain their language and culture. More than five thousand Latvians came to Michigan after World War II, found gainful employment, purchased homes, and became a part of the Michigan population. Most sought to reeducate themselves and struggled to educate their children in Michigan's many colleges and universities. *Latvians in Michigan* examines Latvia and its history, and describes how World War II culminated in famine, death, and eventual flight from their homeland by many Latvian refugees. After the war ended, most Latvian emigrants eventually made their way to Sweden or Germany, where they lived in displaced persons camps. From there, the emigrants were sponsored by individuals or organizations and they moved once again to other parts of the world. Many came to the United States, where they established new roots and tried to perpetuate their cultural heritage while establishing new lives.

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