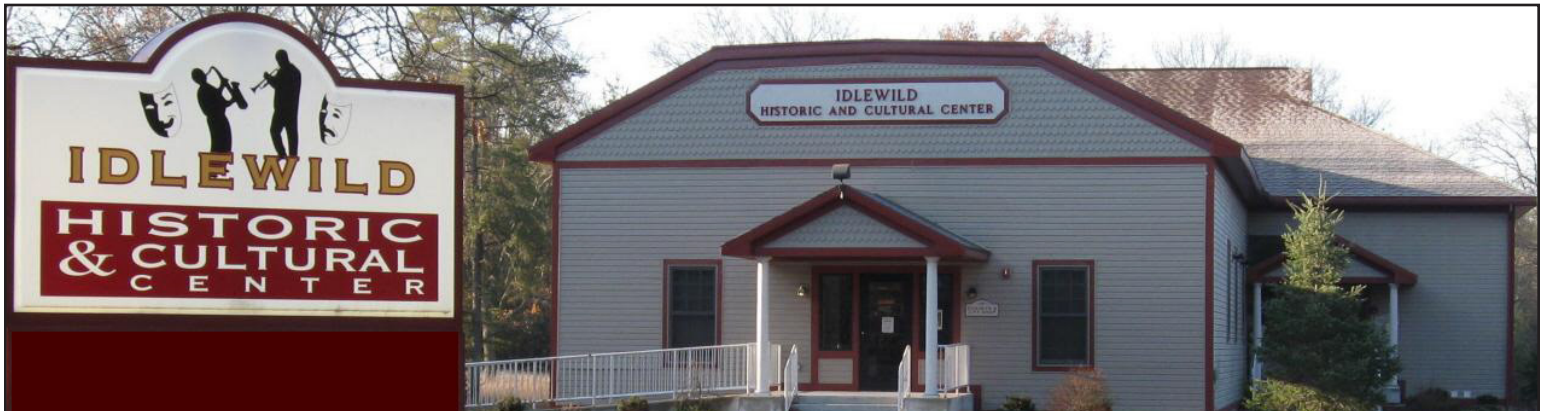


Friends of



# IDLEWILD

## Historic & Cultural Center



Established in 2003, the Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center provides a location where the many people who are fascinated by the historic community can learn more about what makes Idlewild an important piece of American history.

## Experience a piece of history

Contributions  
from members  
ensure the  
story lives on

There's a sign that welcomes people to the historic community of Idlewild.

If they've seen the documentaries or read the stories, they know that this where nightclubs once welcomed some of the most

influential musicians of the 20th Century.

They also know that, before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, this resort community in the woods of northern Michigan was one of the few places in the U.S. where

African Americans could simultaneously escape city life and segregation. They could freely enjoy the sparkle of starlight, the shimmer of the lakes and the right to own property.

Continued on PAGE 4

### What's Inside:

■ **IDLEWILD ON THE MOVE:** "Welcome to Idlewild: The Black Eden of Michigan" Traveling Exhibit visits Traverse City's Denno's Museum

■ **REMEMBERING THE MUSIC:** Now legendary performers graced the stages of Idlewild nightclubs

■ **ON DISPLAY:** Visitors peruse

cases filled with memorabilia and view local artwork

■ **PERMANENT EXHIBITS:** "Welcome to Idlewild: The Black Eden of Michigan" and the U.S. Forest Service display about the African American Civilian Conservation Corps camps tell the whole story of Idlewild

■ **BECOME A FRIEND:** Support the Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center

Visit us This  
Summer!

The Idlewild Historic & Cultural  
Center is open:

Saturdays from 10 a.m.  
to 5 p.m.

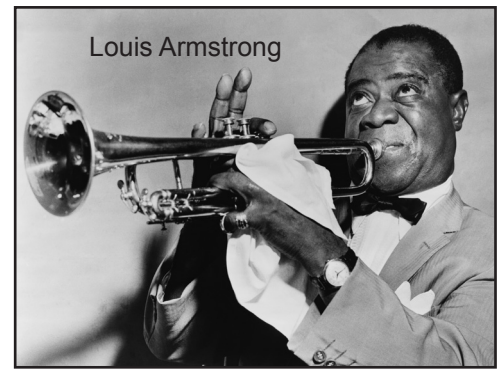
Special arrangements can be  
made by calling (231) 757-3785.



Duke Ellington



Will Mastin Trio



Louis Armstrong

When segregation barred them from other venues ...

# There was no greater place than Idlewild

It wasn't until 1944 that Sammy Davis Jr., his father and their close friend, Will Mastin, became the first black performers to play a club on the Strip in Las Vegas. It was another 10 years before they were allowed to stay in one of the hotels or patronize one of the casinos.

It was this kind of pervasive racism across the U.S. that led to the organization of the "Chitlin' Circuit," a series of bars, nightclubs and theaters that welcomed African American performers.

Idlewild became a favorite stop for performers on the Circuit for the same reason it was enjoyed by families. They had the opportunity to relax in the wonders of nature, swim in pristine lakes, ride horses and breathe fresh air.

Jim Crow didn't exist in Idlewild. It was one of the first places in the country to be truly integrated and people traveled from all over to catch the shows. Audiences were equally made up of whites and blacks, sitting

side by side.

Among the now legendary performers who graced the stages in Idlewild were: Louis Armstrong, James Brown, Jerry Butler, Cab Calloway, Bill Cosby, Sammy Davis Jr., Duke Ellington, The Four Tops, Aretha Franklin, Etta James, B.B. King, Della Reese, The Spinners, The Temptations, T-Bone Walker, Thomas "Fats" Waller, Dinah Washington, Jackie Wilson and Stevie Wonder.

A portion of the exhibit "Welcome to Idlewild: The Black Eden of Michigan" (pictured at right) is

dedicated to the entertainers who played Idlewild and the nightclubs that hosted them. Idlewild came to be know as "The Summer Apollo of Michigan," a reference to the historic theater in Harlem. One of these clubs, The Flamingo Club (pictured bottom left), is now shuttered but in the 1930s, '40s and '50s, it was one of two nightclubs that drew some of the most influential black entertainers of the time. In this picture from the Archives of Michigan, The Paradise Club (below left) is shown before it burned down.



## The Summer Apollo of Michigan

Through the late 1920s and mid-1930s annual Chautauqua were popular as both educational and entertainment. When club owners began booking famous black performers, Idlewild became known as the "Summer Apollo of Michigan,"



# NOTABLE IDLEWILDERS

## Dr. Daniel Hale Williams

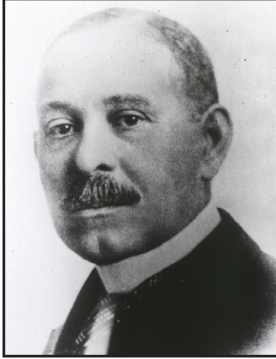
- First person to successfully perform open heart surgery in the United States

- Founder of Provident Hospital, the first non-segregated hospital in the U.S.

- “Dr. Dan” was among one of the first excursions planned by the Idlewild Resort Community

- With other early property owners, Dr. Dan helped found the Idlewild Improvement Association, which recruited and sold property to other professionals from cities around the Midwest

- Died at his home in Idlewild in the summer of 1931



- Philanthropist who donated to many civil rights causes, schools, community organizations and campaigned with leaders of the NAACP to make lynching a federal crime

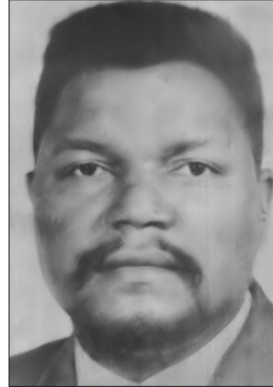
## Robert and Mabel Williams

- Civil rights activists who began as leaders of the Monroe, N.C. chapter of the NAACP and went on to advocate armed self-defense in the face of racism

- Made waves by bringing attention to the injustices of the South, particularly regarding “The Kissing Case” where two boys, one 7 and the other 9, were incarcerated because a white girl had kissed one of them on the cheek

- Spent 1961 to 1969 in exile in Cuba and China after trumped up charges of kidnapping led to an FBI warrant for Robert’s arrest (charges were later dropped)

- While in exile, they published a newspaper (The Crusader), broadcast on Radio Free Dixie and Robert



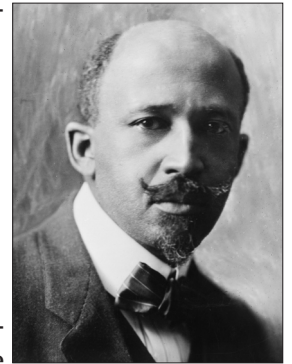
wrote “Negroes with Guns,” a book that inspired the founders of the Black Panthers

- Robert passed away in 1996, but Mabel continues to reside in Lake County and helped develop the exhibition “Welcome to Idlewild: The Black Eden of Michigan”

## W. E. B. DuBois

- Civil rights leader who was one of the co-founders of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People)

- Author and editor of the NAACP’s monthly magazine, “The Crisis” in which he wrote passionately about the beauty and freedom of Idlewild



## Madame C.J. Walker

- First self-made female millionaire in the United States

- Founded the Madame C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company which distributed the line of beauty and hair care products its namesake developed



## Charles W. Chesnutt

- Author, lawyer and political activist whose works explored racism in the South after the Civil War

- Awarded the NAACP’s Spingarn Medal in 1928



*Share your memories from Idlewild*

*FiveCAP, Inc. is always looking to expand the collection of photos and memorabilia from Idlewild displayed at the Historic & Cultural Center. If you have items you'd like to contribute, contact us at (231) 723-3785 or send them to:*

**FiveCAP, Inc., P.O. Box 37  
Scottville, MI 49454**

# The Idlewild Experience

... Continued from Page 1

Fascinated with the part of American history that Idlewild represents, people go looking for the community. Visitors will no longer find world-class nightclubs and hotels. In fact, for many years, the sign was all there was to see.

“The story of Idlewild was being told everywhere in the country but Idlewild,” said FiveCAP, Inc. Executive Director Mary Trucks. “The irony of that was not lost on us.

“People would see the Idlewild sign, turn off U.S. 10 and just drive around wondering, ‘where is Idlewild?’ We wanted an end-destination attraction in Idlewild where people could come and experience this place and learn its significance.”

The Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center was developed by FiveCAP, Inc. with community support from the Lake County Enterprise Community Board.

FiveCAP, Inc. worked with Michigan State University Museum, African American historian and author Ronald Stephens as well as civil rights leader and Lake County resident Mabel R. Williams to develop an exhibition titled “Welcome to Idlewild: The Black Eden of Michigan” with the intent of telling the whole story of Idlewild, from the community’s perspective.

Operation of the Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center is made possible through the generous contributions of its members and donations from visitors. In this way, the center not only gives

people the opportunity to learn about Idlewild, but also to be a part of this critical piece of American history.

Idlewild was founded in 1912 and remained a popular vacation destination until 1964, when the Civil Rights Act ended

segregation and African Americans were allowed to travel freely.

Visitors to the IHCC will also see a second exhibit created by the U.S. Forest Service that details the history of the black Civilian Conservation Corps camps that were nearby. Many of the CCC members were the earliest year-round residents of Idlewild, including the community’s first doctor.

The center houses a collection of items that represent stories of people who lived and vacationed in Idlewild, many of which have been donated by family members of former Idlewilders.

The Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center is open to the public on Saturdays during the summer, but the exhibits can also be viewed year-round by appointment. Conference and meeting spaces are also available for rent.

More information about the Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center can be obtained by calling FiveCAP, Inc. at (231) 757-3785.

...

**INSET:** A statue that is part of the permanent display at the Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center by local artist George Thomas.



## Taking the story on the road

“Welcome to Idlewild: The Black Eden of Michigan” is permanently on display at the Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center, but the desire existed to share the community’s story with a wider audience. A reproduction was made and is managed by Michigan State Museum’s traveling exhibition services.

The Dennon Museum in Traverse City hosted the exhibition from Jan. 15 until April 1.

Museum director Gene Jenneman said it was well received and drew numerous inquiries from people all over the state.

Locally, he added, many visitors to the museum shared personal experiences they remembered from visiting Idlewild when they were young, while others expressed amazement at having never known Idlewild existed.

“We hosted the Harlem Gospel Choir in January,” Jenneman said, “and I took them into the gallery to see the exhibition. They’re from New York, of course, and they knew nothing about Idlewild, so it was kind of a pleasant revelation for them.

“Overall I think it was a success and I’m very pleased that we did it here.”

For more information, contact the traveling exhibition service manager for MSU Museum at (517) 432-3800.

Become a Friend of



# IDLEWILD

Historic & Cultural Center

## Be a part of history

By becoming a member of the Friends of Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center, you will have the heartfelt satisfaction of knowing that you are helping to support the story of Idlewild for future generations.

One hundred years after it was founded, Idlewild is still captivating people, just as its beauty captivated the first vacationers and the legendary entertainers who graced the stages here captivated their audiences. One hundred years from now, we believe that fascination will still exist.



Idlewild represents a time in our collective story when racism ruled. Relief from the reaches of Jim Crow existed in this small resort community in Lake County, Michigan, which was one of the first truly integrated places in the whole country.

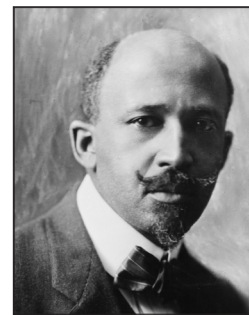
People are drawn to Idlewild and it is our mission to give them a place to go. Operated by FiveCAP, Inc., the IHCC provides an end-destination attraction in this historic community so people from all over the world can experience a piece of American history.

Your annual membership fee of \$20 can help us tell the incredible story of Idlewild. Proceeds from the Friends of Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center membership drive go to support the operations of the center.

As a Friend of the Idlewild Historic & Cultural Center, you will receive an annual newsletter, updating you on the activities at the IHCC. But more importantly, you will become a part of this incredible story by helping to maintain the place where it will always be told.

Welcome to Idlewild, the Black Eden of Michigan!

“For sheer physical beauty – for sheen of water and golden air, for nobleness of tree and flower of shrub, for shimmering river and song of bird and the low, moving whisper of sun, moon and star, it is the beautifullest stretch I have seen for twenty years; and then to that add fellowship – sweet, strong women and keen-witted men from Canada and Texas, California and New York, Ohio, Missouri and Illinois – all sons and grand-children of Ethiopia, all with the wide leisure of rest and play – can you imagine a more marvelous thing than Idlewild?”



W. E. B. Du Bois  
The Crisis, 1921



Idlewild Lake viewed from Williams Island

### IHCC MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Please mail this form and your payment to:

FiveCAP, Inc., P.O. Box 37

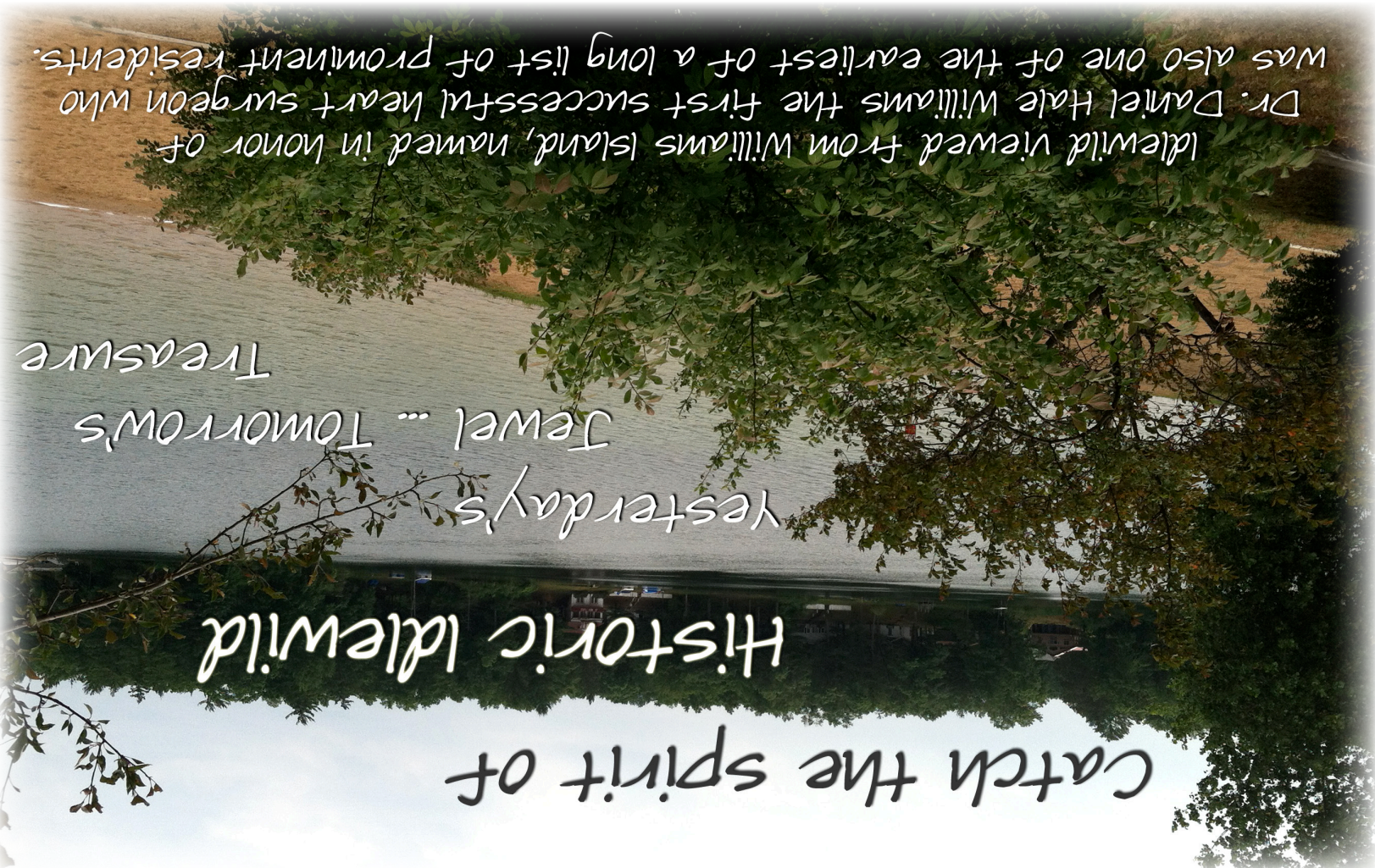
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Catch the spirit of

Historic Idlewild

yesterday's

Jewel ... Tomorrow's

Treasure

Idlewild viewed from Williams Island, named in honor of Dr. Daniel Hale Williams the first successful heart surgeon who was also one of the earliest of a long list of prominent residents.