

Idlewild Lake Walking Tour

Heritage Route

14. Yates Fire/Township Hall

The brick and concrete block building was designed by Mr. Woolsey Coombs and erected using volunteer labor in the fall of 1949. The original, two-story portion of the building housed the fire hall. The Yates Township Fire Department continued to operate out of the building for over 50 years.

15. Louis Armstrong Home

In 1936, Louis Armstrong recounted his time spent at Idlewild in his first autobiography, *Swing That Music*. He wrote in his book, "Lil and I were making real good money between us and we began to do what we wanted. We bought a house and a little car and then we bought some lots on the lake front at Idlewild, which was a summer resort on Idlewild Lake, out from Chicago. Another thing I liked to do was to ride horseback there. I would rent myself a good old nag for an hour or two and climb on without any saddle and in my suit and ride around the country."

16. Birch Haven

Birch Haven was the summer residence of Ms. Violette Neatly Johnson Anderson and her family. Ms. Anderson was the first African-American woman to practice law in the U.S. District Court Eastern Division. She served as the first female Chicago prosecutor in 1922-1923, and became the first African-American woman admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States.

17. Dr. Robert L. Bradby Residence

Dr. Robert Bradby was the pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Detroit, the oldest African-American church in Michigan, which boasted a membership of approximately 5,000 in the early 1920s.



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18. Lydia Inn

In 1959, when writing about Idlewild, a local resident called the Lydia Inn "One of the first three places to accommodate guests in the early days. It holds the memory of serving many of the founders and visitors from all over the country."

19. Sweetheart Motel

Considered one of the most popular lodges in the area during the 1950s-1960s, the 11-unit property provided housing for club performers, including Joe "Ziggy" Johnson. Once painted "sweetheart" pink, the concrete block structures retain a faint pink cast.

20. Madame C. J. Walker property

Madame C. J. Walker, first self-made U.S. woman millionaire, was an early resident of Idlewild. Inventor of the straightening comb, she initially sold her product door-to-door, but eventually employed a sales force of 20,000 for her hair care products and cosmetics. She opened offices in Denver and Philadelphia and, by 1917, her business was earning \$250,000 a year.



