



Front - Title/Description

The Island

The Island, once accessible only by footbridges, was the center of life at Idlewild from the 1910s into the 1960s. Early advertisements for the resort described Island Park as having a beautiful bathing beach and a small “parlor”, or clubhouse, on the east shore. Built in 1916, the parlor was a social hub. By 1923 the Idlewild Resort Company boasted in the Chicago Defender that the Island had a dance pavilion, saddle horses, a new 62-room hotel, and a “cottage city” of 29 sleeping cottages. Locals called these “doghouses” due to their small size. During the 1930s and 1940s, entrepreneur Virgil Williams ran a hotel and nightclub here. Detroit Phil Gilles purchased them during the 1940s. For some 20 years Giles’ savvy marketing of Idlewild’s nightlife drew audiences from the Midwest and beyond.

Back - Title/Description

The Flamingo Club

Detroit hotelier Phil Giles opened the Flamingo Club in 1955. A 1956 Chicago Defender article reported it was “classed with the top nighteries” in the nation. As early as the 1920s, resorters had many options for evening activities, including card parties and dances. By the 1930s the Island’s clubhouse had been renovated as the Idlewild Club Casino. During the next thirty years venues with the Paradise Club and the El Morocco featured top African American entertainers, including Sara Vaughan, Jackie Wilson, and the Four Tops. Idlewild’s club scene declined during the 1960s, in part because of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which provided equal access to employment in public places and expanded opportunities for black entertainers and audiences alike. The Flamingo closed by 1968.

Significant Date:

Industry and Invention (1875-1915)

Registry Year: 2008 **Erected Date:** 2009

Marker Location

Address: 1002 Martin Luther King Avenue

City: Idlewild

State: MI **ZipCode:** 49642

County: Lake

Township: Yates

Lat: 43.89592097 / **Long:** -85.78197956

Web URL: