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*at a
glance*



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Lake County: At A Glance

Life in Lake County is defined by space—wide forests, winding rivers, open trails, and small communities rooted in resilience and independence. Set inland from Lake Michigan, the county's character is shaped by its natural landscape and by the people who value a quieter pace, strong connections, and a deep relationship with the outdoors.

Lake County: At A Glance offers a snapshot of how residents and visitors experience the county throughout the year. More than a calendar of events, this section reflects the rhythms of daily life in a place where seasons matter, traditions endure, and recreation, culture, and community intersect in meaningful ways.

Winter in Lake County brings stillness and simplicity. Snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and winter trail use draw outdoor enthusiasts, while local events, library programs, and school and community gatherings provide opportunities to connect during the colder months. The season highlights the county's self-reliance and its ability to find warmth and activity even in the quietest time of year.

Spring signals renewal across the county's rivers, forests, and back roads. As snow melts and waterways rise, anglers return, trails reopen, and communities begin to re-engage outdoors. Spring also brings local celebrations, cleanup days, and the gradual return of markets, festivals, and civic events that mark the transition into a more active season.

Summer is Lake County's most dynamic time of year. Campgrounds fill, ORV and trail systems see heavy use, and rivers and lakes become central gathering places. Festivals, concerts, parades, and community celebrations reflect the county's welcoming spirit and its reputation as a destination for outdoor recreation. For both residents and visitors, summer showcases Lake County at its most vibrant and accessible.

Fall brings color, reflection, and a renewed appreciation for place. Harvest events, community festivals, and outdoor recreation continue as forests turn and crowds thin. The season underscores the county's agricultural roots and small-town character, closing the year with traditions that bring neighbors together before winter returns.

Across all four seasons, Lake County's identity is shaped by more than scheduled events. It is found in its public lands and trail networks, its commitment to outdoor access, its schools and libraries, and the strength of its local organizations and volunteers. The county's appeal lies not in spectacle, but in authenticity—offering space to explore, gather, and belong.

At A Glance is intended as an entry point into that experience, providing an accessible overview of Lake County life across the calendar year. While this section highlights many signature events and traditions, it represents only a portion of what takes place here. Dates and details may change due to printing deadlines, and new activities continue to emerge as the year unfolds.

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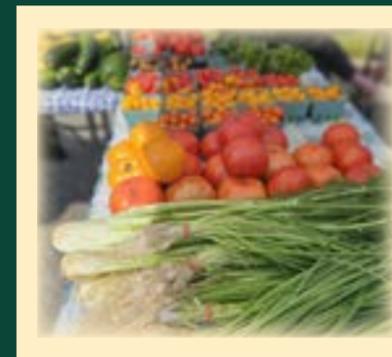
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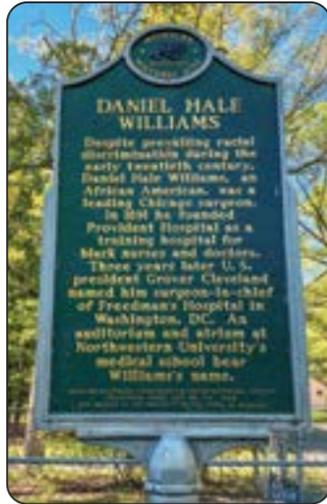
CULTURE: Stories, Songs and Community in Lake County

Culture

Lake County's cultural scene is defined by history, music and community traditions that bring people together throughout the year. While the county is widely known for its forests, rivers and trails, arts and entertainment play a central role in shaping the visitor experience—particularly in Baldwin, Idlewild and Irons. From outdoor concert series to museums and heritage sites, Lake County offers a relaxed but meaningful cultural landscape rooted in place.

Idlewild: Music and Cultural Legacy

Few communities in Michigan carry the cultural significance of **Idlewild**, once nationally recognized as a premier African American resort destination during segregation. Music has long been central to Idlewild's identity, and that tradition continues today.



Each summer, Idlewild hosts outdoor music festivals that draw regional audiences. The Idlewild Summer Soul Festival and Live at Idlewild feature soul, blues, R&B, jazz and funk, alongside food vendors, arts booths and community activities. These events celebrate both

contemporary performers and the musical traditions that made Idlewild famous.

The Idlewild Historic and Cultural Center supports this legacy year-round through exhibits, educational programming and cultural events that preserve and interpret Idlewild's history.

Summer Concert Venues and Live Music

Live music is a hallmark of warm-weather months in Lake County, with several outdoor venues offering free or low-cost performances.



In Baldwin, the Wenger Pavilion serves as the county's primary outdoor concert venue. The pavilion hosts the Baldwin Summer Concerts series, with live music scheduled regularly throughout the season. Performances typically feature jazz, blues, folk and classic rock, and audiences are encouraged to bring lawn chairs or enjoy the concerts from their vehicles.

The Lake County Historical Museum also contributes to the live music calendar through its Folk Fridays concert series. Held outdoors on museum grounds, the series highlights local and regional musicians in an informal, family-friendly setting that blends music with local history.

Additional live music often accompanies community events, festivals and holiday celebrations in Baldwin and Idlewild.

Museums and Heritage Experiences

Lake County's museums provide important context for understanding the region's culture and history.



The Lake County Historical Museum in Baldwin features rotating exhibits on early settlement, logging and railroad history, military service, and everyday life in Lake County communities. A research library supports genealogy and local history research, making the museum a resource for both visitors and residents.

Nearby, the Shrine of the Pines stands as one of Lake County's most distinctive cultural landmarks. Created by craftsman E. G. Sievers, the shrine showcases hand-crafted pine furniture and carvings honoring Michigan's white pine era. Set among towering trees, the site blends folk art, craftsmanship and reflection in a uniquely Northwoods setting.

Art and Creative Spaces

While Lake County does not have large

commercial galleries, visitors can still experience visual art rooted in the local landscape. Danaher Creek Studio offers a working artist studio environment, featuring paintings and mixed-media works inspired by the county's forests, wetlands and wildlife. Studio visits provide an intimate look at how nature continues to shape creative expression in Lake County.

Signature Festivals and Community Traditions

One of Lake County's most recognizable annual events is the Flea Roast and Ox Market, held each summer in Irons. The long-running festival combines carnival rides, games, vendors, competitions and fireworks, making it a highlight of the year for families and visitors.

Seasonal events such as holiday celebrations, community movie nights

and youth-focused programming round out the calendar, ensuring that arts and entertainment remain part of Lake County life beyond the summer months.

A Cultural Experience Shaped by Place

Lake County's culture, arts and entertainment offerings are not defined by large venues or crowded schedules, but by authenticity and connection to community. Outdoor concerts bring neighbors together in Baldwin. Music festivals honor Idlewild's national legacy. Museums and heritage sites preserve stories of craftsmanship, resilience and creativity.

For visitors, Lake County offers a chance to experience culture at a slower pace—one shaped by history, music and shared traditions that continue to define the county today.



Learning in Lake County: Public Schools and Student Opportunities

Public education in Lake County, Michigan, reflects the county's rural character, with most students served by a locally based school district and others attending schools in neighboring counties where district boundaries extend across county lines.

The primary public school district serving Lake County is **Baldwin Community Schools**, which educates students from preschool through 12th grade. The district is headquartered in the village of Baldwin and operates Baldwin Elementary School, Baldwin Junior High School and Baldwin Senior High School. During the 2024-25 school year, Baldwin Community Schools enrolled approximately 420 students districtwide, supported by a comparatively low student-teacher ratio that allows for smaller class sizes and individualized instruction.

As the only district based entirely within Lake County, Baldwin Community Schools serves as a central educational and community institution. In addition to core academic programming, the district places an emphasis on student support services, early childhood education and community engagement.

That commitment has been reflected in local recognition for district staff. Educators and student support professionals from Baldwin Junior-Senior High School have received community and regional honors for their work with students, including awards presented through special education advocacy organizations that recognize exceptional dedication to students with disabilities. These honors are nominated by families and peers, underscoring the district's role in supporting students with diverse learning needs.

Student achievement is also recognized locally through academic honor rolls and school-based celebrations highlighting scholastic performance across middle and high school grade levels. District leaders regularly cite student engagement and close relationships between staff and families as key strengths of the small, rural district.

Extracurricular activities play a significant role in student life at **Baldwin Community Schools**. The district offers interscholastic athletics, including team sports at the junior high and high school levels, as well as clubs and activities that support leadership, creativity and social



development. Students participate in visual and performing arts programs, including music and art, alongside academic enrichment opportunities such as STEM-focused events and school-wide learning nights that involve families and the broader community.

An important component of extracurricular life at Baldwin Community Schools is the district's band program, which serves students at the junior high and high school levels. The program provides instruction in instrumental music and offers students opportunities to perform both in school and at community events.

The Baldwin band program is a visible presence at athletic events, school concerts and local celebrations, contributing to school spirit and community engagement. Students participate in rehearsals and performances throughout the school year, developing skills in musicianship, teamwork and discipline. Music education is also integrated into broader visual and performing arts offerings within the district, supporting creative expression alongside academic learning.



District leaders frequently cite participation in programs such as band as an important enrichment opportunity for students in a small, rural school setting, where extracurricular activities play a key role in student engagement and connection to the school community.

Not all Lake County students attend

Lake County may attend Mason County Central Schools, based in Scottville, while others closer to the Mason-Manistee county line may be served by Mason County Eastern Schools, headquartered in Custer.

Which district a student attends is

Baldwin Community Schools. Because public school district boundaries in Michigan do not align strictly with county borders, some Lake County residents live within attendance areas of neighboring Mason County districts. Students in portions of western and southwestern

determined by the location of the student's residence rather than county of residence, unless a family participates in Michigan's schools-of-choice program or another enrollment option.

Lake County does not have a college or university campus within its borders, but residents have access to higher education, workforce training and continuing education opportunities in surrounding counties through regional community colleges and universities.

Together, Baldwin Community Schools and neighboring districts form the public education network serving Lake County. While Baldwin Community Schools remains the cornerstone of local education, its recognized staff, active extracurricular programs and community-centered approach highlight the role schools play in sustaining Lake County's small-town character and future workforce.

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Lake County villages and townships: governance, populations, contacts

Lake County's local government revolves around its villages and civil townships, a structure typical of rural Michigan counties where there are **no incorporated cities** and most residents live outside traditional municipal boundaries.

According to the **2020 U.S. Census**, Lake County had a population of **12,096** people, with a median age of about 51.5 years and a predominantly rural settlement pattern. The county seat and administrative center is the village of **Baldwin**, where residents access most countywide services.

County governance

Lake County government operates from the **Lake County Courthouse at 800 Tenth Street, Baldwin, MI 49304**. The central county phone number is (231) 745-2776. The Board of Commissioners sets policy and adopts the county budget, and elected county officials — including the sheriff, prosecuting attorney, clerk and register of deeds, treasurer and judges — oversee day-to-day operations. County services include courts, public safety coordination, emergency management, health services and records.

Villages

Baldwin (Village) — Population: 902 (2020)

- Address: 620 Washington Street, Baldwin, MI 49304
- Phone: (231) 745-3587
- Website: www.villageofbaldwin.org

Baldwin is the county seat and largest population center in Lake County. It provides municipal utilities, local ordinances, street maintenance and community services through an elected village council.

Luther (Village) — Population: 332 (2020 approximate)

- Address: 119 State Street, Luther, MI 49656
- Phone: (231) 797-4215
- Website: www.villageofluther.org

Luther is a smaller incorporated village on the county's eastern edge with locally elected leaders handling ordinances, streets and basic services, and coordinates broader services with the county.

Townships

Lake County's **15 civil townships** are governed by elected boards (supervisor, clerk, treasurer and trustees). They administer local zoning, property assessment, election administration, township roads and community services for unincorporated areas. Some provide or support fire protection and emergency services in cooperation with the county sheriff's office and neighboring jurisdictions.

LAKE COUNTY AT A GLANCE • 2026

• **Chase Township** — Township hall located at 8296 U.S. 10 in Chase. Phone: 231-832-5810. The township does not maintain an official website.

• **Cherry Valley Township** — Township offices are based at 5850 S. Kings Highway in Chase. Phone: 231-745-4411. More information is available at cherryvalleytwsp.org.

• **Dover Township** — Township business is conducted at the hall located at 8092 N. Raymond Road in Tustin. Phone: 231-878-6647. The township does not operate a standalone website.

• **Eden Township** — The township hall is located at 5837 W. 10½ Mile Road in Irons. Phone: 231-266-8277. The township website is edentownshipironsmi.com.

• **Elk Township** — Township offices are located at 8966 N. Bass Lake Road in Irons. Phone: 231-266-5983. Information is available at elk-township.org.

• **Ellsworth Township** — Headquartered at 210 N. State Road in Luther. Phone: 231-250-2397. The township website is ellsworthtownship.com.

• **Lake Township** — Township offices are located at 15580 S. Star Lake Drive in Baldwin. Phone: 231-898-3189. The township does not maintain an official website.



• **Newkirk Township** — Township business is conducted at 301 State Street in Luther. Phone: 231-797-5249. No official website is maintained.

• **Peacock Township** — Township hall located at 4480 W. 4 Mile Road in Irons. Phone: 231-266-5122. Additional information is available at peacock-township.org.

• **Pinora Township** — The township hall is located at 4032 S. Deer Lake Road in Chase. Phone: 231-832-5398. The township website is pinoratownshipmi.org.

• **Pleasant Plains Township** — Township offices are based at 7333 S. M-37 in Baldwin. Phone: 231-745-2949. More information is available at pleasant-plainstwp.org.

• **Sauble Township** — Township business is conducted at 8906 W. 6 Mile Road in Irons. Phone: 231-266-8384. The township website is saubletwp.org.

• **Sweetwater Township** — Township hall located at 9991 W. Wingleton Road in Branch. Phone: 231-898-2633. The township does not operate a standalone website.

• **Webber Township** — Township offices are located at 2286 W. Springtime Street in Baldwin. Phone: 231-745-3471. No official website is maintained.

• **Yates Township** — Township business is conducted at 6437 S. Nelson Road in Idlewild. Phone: 231-745-3940. Additional information is available at yatestownship.com.

Unincorporated communities

Several population centers in Lake County — including Idlewild, Irons, Branch, Chase, Peacock, Sauble and Wolf Lake — lack their own municipal governments and rely on the townships where they are located and the county for services.

Idlewild, in **Yates Township**, is notable for its history as a resort community founded by African Americans in the early 20th century.

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Who to call

LAKE COUNTY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

Building Department

800 10th St., Suite 110, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-2722
Website: www.lakecounty-michigan.com

County Clerk / Register of Deeds

Address: 800 10th St., Suite 200, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone (Clerk): (231) 745-2725
Phone (Register of Deeds): (231) 745-4641
Website: www.lakecounty-michigan.com

Equalization Department

Address: 800 10th St., Suite 230, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-2723
Website: www.lakecounty-michigan.com

Prosecutor's Office

Address: 800 10th St., Suite 220, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-2775
Website: www.lakecounty-michigan.com

Sheriff's Office

Address: 1153 Michigan Ave., Baldwin, MI 49304
Dispatch: (231) 745-2711
Office: (231) 745-2712
Website: www.lakecounty-michigan.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/LakeCountySheriff

County Administrator's Office

Address: 800 10th St., Suite 100, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-6231
Email: tlake@co.lake.mi.us

Trial Court (Circuit, District & Probate)

Address: 800 10th St., Suite 300, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-4614
Website: www.lakecounty-michigan.com

Emergency Management / Homeland Security

Address: 800 10th St., Suite 100, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-6205

Animal Control

Address: 3390 S. Dogtrack Road, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-3079
Website: www.lakecounty-michigan.com

Treasurer's Office

Address: 800 10th St., Suite 210, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-4622
Website: www.lakecounty-michigan.com

STATE & FEDERAL OFFICES

Michigan Secretary of State - Baldwin Branch

Address: 5653 S. M-37, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (888) 767-6424

U.S. Forest Service - Baldwin/White Cloud District

Address: 650 N. Michigan Ave., Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-4631
Website: www.fs.usda.gov/hmnf

Michigan Department of Natural Resources - Baldwin Field Office

Address: 2468 W. 24th St., Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-4651

EDUCATION & LIBRARIES

West Shore Educational Service District

Address: 2130 W. U.S. 10, Ludington, MI 49431
Phone: (231) 757-3716
Fax: (231) 747-2406

Baldwin Community Schools

Address: 525 Fourth St., Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-4791
Website: www.baldwin.k12.mi.us

Pathfinder Community Library

Address: 812 Michigan Ave., Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-4010
Email: pathfinderlibrary123@gmail.com

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

District Health Department No. 10 - Lake County Office

Address: 5681 S. M-37, Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-4663
WIC: (231) 745-4831
Website: www.dhd10.org

West Michigan Community Mental Health - Lake County

Address: Atwell Building, 1090 N. Michigan Ave., Baldwin, MI 49304
General: (231) 745-4659
Crisis Line: (800) 992-2061
Veterans Affairs Office (Lake County)
Email: veterans@co.lake.mi.us

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Mason-Lake Conservation District

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Phone: (231) 757-3707 ext. 5

SENIOR SERVICES

Grand Oaks Nursing Center

Address: 600 Denmark St., Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-4648

Hollister Senior Citizen Center

Address: 1505 Michigan Ave., Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-3843

Peacock Senior Center

Address: 4240 W. 4 Mile Road, Irons, MI 49644
Phone: (231) 266-5785

Luther Senior Citizens Building

Address: 300 Ash St., Luther, MI 49656
Phone: (231) 797-5401

St. Ann's Lake County Senior Services

Address: 690 E. Ninth St., Baldwin, MI 49304
Phone: (231) 745-7201



Henrietta Summers Senior Citizens Center

Address: 723 E. Lansing Blvd., Idlewild, MI 49642
Phone: (231) 745-4011

Oakwood Manor Apartments (Senior Housing)

Address: 401 Washington St., Baldwin, MI 49304
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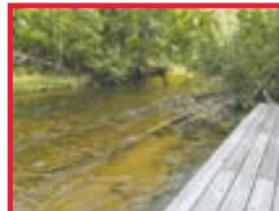
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History

Big History, Quiet Places, Endless Outdoors

By Shanna Avery
Ludington Daily News Staff Writer

Known for its vast woodlands, lakes and streams, Lake County drew outdoor enthusiasts from its earliest days. When it was named “Lake County” in 1843, later local historians believed the name was chosen to attract people to its recreational advantages. Its natural beauty, cultural enrichment and fascinating history continue to draw those who appreciate stepping away from the bustle and into small-town and country life with big things going for it.

The county was first named Aischum, after a Potawatomi chief who signed treaties on Michigan lands from 1818 to 1836, according to a historical account of the county by Laverne M. Judkins dating to 1959.

Before white settlers arrived, Ottawas made their camps and homes along the rivers and surrounding lands, fishing, hunting and gathering. After towns and settlements sprang up, they sold handmade items such as woven baskets, beads, furs, berries and other wares, according to early settler accounts.

The first white settler in the county was Lorenzo Conlin, who located on a farm in Section 34 of Chase Township in 1862. After the Civil War ended, Union veterans began staking out homesteads throughout the area.

Early settlers around Chase and Pinora includ-

ed Elias Griffith, Zach Blood, Erastus Haines, Charles and David Randall, and John and Robert Bigbee. In Yates Township, John T. Batchelder arrived by 1869 and homesteaded in 1870. William Forman, for whom the settlement of Forman was named, and James Armstrong also settled in the area. Austin Randall was one of the founders of Summitville. In Nirvana, Francis D. Lacy operated a mill. James M. Avery homesteaded in Cherry Valley Township. Henry Allen settled in the northeastern part of the county along the Pine River, and Abner Burdick, John Nelson and Alex Hoover settled near what would become the Luther area.

About a dozen Union soldiers from the same regiment founded Carr Settlement, named for Charles Carr of the group.

Baldwin was first named Hannibal, and Isaac Grant—who also served as sheriff—built a store and headed a committee to rename the growing town Baldwin, after Michigan’s governor. The governor was so honored that he gifted Baldwin a large American flag.

Jesse Bradford settled on a farm east of Baldwin in 1878, bringing his large family from the Channel Islands. The Cashion family, just north of Baldwin, had a lake named for them, while Sanborn Creek was named for the Sanborn family. Townsend Lake was named for George Townsend, and Hamlin Lake for the Hamlin family that settled near Baldwin.

Early settlers often carried groceries on their backs after walking to Big Rapids, the nearest trading post at the time. Some traveled the old stagecoach line, known as State Road, from Grand Rapids to Traverse City to reach their new homesteads.

With towns continuing to develop, Lake County officially organized in 1871, with Chase Township as the county seat. The first officers were Sheriff George Collier; Clerk and Registrar David Lathrop; Treasurer Robert Bigbee; Judge of Probate James Foster; Surveyor George Brown; and coroners Israel Smith and Wesley Holcomb.

By 1874, the Flint & Pere Marquette Railroad was completed through the county, extending west to Ludington.

The county purchased a safe to store records and built a shack near the railroad tracks on the west edge of Chase near Joiner’s Mill. Later, 20 acres were acquired in Section 4, now part of the east side of town, and Treasurer Bigbee built a courthouse. However, the safe was too large to fit through the door, so it was returned to the shack—where it remained until April 30, 1875, when a nighttime incident later remembered as “The Battle of the County Seat” took place.

For several years, the location of the county seat was a source of intense rivalry, particularly between Chase and Baldwin. A vote favored moving the county seat to Baldwin, but Chase officials refused, alleging voter fraud. Baldwin residents then took matters into their own hands, arriving by train in

the early morning hours.

Chase men were on guard, and the sound of a mill whistle announced the Baldwin crew’s arrival. A physical confrontation followed, with pitchforks, buzz saws, sticks, metal rods, fists and even pistols reportedly involved. While there were no fatalities, some men suffered broken bones and other injuries. The Baldwin group dismantled the shed, loaded the safe onto a railroad car and departed as Chase residents—including women and children—hurled rocks and sticks at the train. According to local newspaper accounts, the Baldwin men gave three cheers for Baldwin and three cheers for the county seat as they left.

With railroad access in place, logging operations expanded rapidly. Lumber barons and mill operators included R.G. Peters, who operated his own railroad line from Luther to Manistee; Justice Stearns; James Ludington; D.A. Blodgett; Alvin Joiner; Volney Lacy; John T. Batchelder and others.

After the pine forests were exhausted, pulpwood cutting sustained the industry for a time. Much of the land remained barren until the Civilian Conservation Corps replanted pine saplings on what would become the Manistee National Forest and surrounding state lands during the 1930s.

As logging declined, agriculture expanded, particularly in the Chase and Pinora areas, around Luther and in Carr Settlement. Where soil conditions were less suitable for crops, cattle ranching took hold.

Recreational tourism has also defined Lake County from its earliest years, capitalizing on its abundant lakes, rivers and streams. Resorts flourished as urban visitors sought fresh air and natural beauty. Local residents found work as fishing guides and lodge employees. German brown trout were first planted in Lake County—a legacy celebrated today through the Troutarama festival and the world’s largest brown trout sculpture.

From Big Star Lake, Whalen Lake, Wolf Lake, Big Bass Lake and many other locations, resort communities emerged. Some left a lasting mark on American cultural history, including Idlewild, a resort community founded for African Americans during segregation that attracted prominent Black entertainers and visitors from across the Midwest and the nation. While Idlewild continues to thrive and experience a cultural renaissance, other communities, such as Marlborough, exist today only in memory, yet remain cherished parts of Lake County’s story.

The Lake County Historical Society preserves much of this history through its archives, artifacts and programs at its museum in downtown Baldwin. Other communities honor their heritage through sites such as the Luther Area Museum, the Shrine of the Pines and the Chase Township Public Library.

To experience the fullness of Lake County is to cherish the history that shaped it into the beloved destination it remains today—for visitors and for those who proudly call it home.

Four Seasons Outside: Lake County's Outdoor Advantage

BALDWIN, Mich. (AP) — Outdoor recreation is a cornerstone of life and livelihood in Lake County, where forests, inland lakes and trail systems drive tourism, support small businesses and shape the county's year-round economy.

Economic impact of the outdoors

Tourism tied to outdoor recreation — including fishing, hunting, ORV riding, snowmobiling, camping and seasonal events — is a primary economic engine in **Lake County**. Visitors drawn by public land access and recreation opportunities support hotels, cabins, campgrounds, restaurants, fuel stations, bait and tackle shops and other small businesses, particularly in and around Baldwin and Idlewild.

Local and regional economic profiles consistently identify tourism as one of Lake County's leading industries. Seasonal visitors and second-home owners significantly increase the county's effective population during peak recreation months, providing critical revenue in a rural county with a relatively small year-round population. Winter recreation, including snowmobiling and sled dog racing, also contributes to off-season economic activity that helps stabilize businesses beyond the summer months.

Forests and trails

Much of Lake County's outdoor access is anchored by public land, including large portions of the **Huron-Manistee National Forests**. The federally managed forest provides year-round opportunities for hiking, wildlife viewing, horseback riding and dispersed camping across extensive pine and hardwood landscapes.

The **North Country National Scenic Trail** crosses through Lake County, with access points along forest roads near Baldwin. In addition, informal and loop-style trails throughout forestlands are used for hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, par-

ticularly during fall color season and winter.

Lakes, rivers and fishing

Lake County contains more than 150 inland lakes, along with numerous creeks and river systems that support fishing and paddling. Popular waters include **Big Star Lake, Idlewild Lake, Harper Lake** and **Cecilia Lake**.

Anglers commonly target **largemouth bass, northern pike, bluegill, crappie, yellow perch and sunfish** in inland lakes, while trout and other cool-water species are found in select streams and rivers where habitat conditions allow. Fishing access includes shorelines, small boats and kayaks, while paddlers take advantage of quieter waterways for canoeing and kayaking during warmer months.

ORV, snowmobiling and motorized recreation

Lake County is widely known for off-road recreation. Designated **ORV and ATV routes**, including the **Little O** and **Big O** trail loops, wind through state and national forest lands and connect Baldwin with surrounding areas. The trail system accommodates ATVs, side-by-sides and motorcycles and allows riders to travel between trailheads, campgrounds and local businesses.

During winter, many of these corridors transition into groomed **snowmobile trails**, drawing riders from across the region and contributing to cold-weather tourism.

Wildlife and hunting

The county's mix of forest, wetland and inland water habitat supports a wide range of wildlife. Common game species include white-tailed deer, wild turkey, small game and waterfowl, making hunting a seasonal draw for residents and visitors. Wildlife viewing and birding are also popular throughout public lands and along



lakes and streams.

Outdoor recreation events

A small number of long-running events highlight Lake County's outdoor identity and seasonal recreation:

• **Baldwin Sled Dog Derby** — Held each January, the derby is one of the Midwest's longest-running sled dog races. Events range from short, spectator-friendly races near downtown Baldwin to longer distance competitions on forest trails outside town.

• **Trout-A-Rama** — Founded in 1956, Trout-A-Rama traces its roots to Baldwin's identity as a trout fishing destination. The summer festival was created to celebrate the area's cold-water streams, angling heritage and outdoor recreation economy. While it has expanded over the decades into a broader community festival, its name and origins continue to reflect Lake County's long-standing connection to fishing, tourism and outdoor life. The event includes the Trout-A-Rama 5K run/walk, which brings runners and walkers to Baldwin each July.

Camping and seasonal use

Public and private campgrounds throughout Lake County support tent camping, RVs and rustic overnight stays, many located near lakes, trailheads or ORV routes. Recreation shifts with the seasons, from fishing and paddling in spring and summer to hunting and fall color hikes, followed by snowmobiling, skiing and sled dog racing in winter.

With extensive public land access and a four-season recreation calendar, Lake County's outdoors continue to play a central role in both its quality of life and



OUTDOORS



Community Connections: Organizations, Clubs and Services in Lake County

Libraries

Pathfinder Community Library serves as the primary public library for Baldwin and surrounding Lake County communities, offering books and digital media, public computers and Wi-Fi, youth and adult programming, community events, and local history resources. It is located at 812 Michigan Ave., Baldwin, MI 49304, and can be reached at 231-745-4010.

Luther Area District Library provides lending materials, digital resources, and educational programming for Luther and nearby Lake County townships, emphasizing literacy and lifelong learning. The library is located at 107 State St., Luther, MI 49656; phone 231-797-2211.

Chase Township Library is a rural township library offering a circulating collection, public internet access, and limited community programming. It is located at 8400 E. North St., Chase, MI 49623; phone 231-832-5222. Peacock Township Library provides books, reference services, and basic public access resources to residents of Peacock Township and nearby areas. It is located at 212 S. Michigan Ave., Peacock, MI 49304; phone 231-745-2641.

Housing and Community Development

Lake County Habitat for Humanity partners with families and volunteers to build and rehabilitate affordable housing, promoting safe living conditions and long-term stability. The organization is located at 9733 M-37, Baldwin, MI 49304; phone 231-745-2688.

Lake County Habitat ReStore operates a volunteer-run resale store selling donated building materials and household goods, with proceeds supporting local housing projects. The ReStore is located at 9733 M-37, Baldwin, MI 49304; phone 231-745-2821.

Health, Family and Social Services

Baldwin Family Health Care is a nonprofit community health center providing medical, dental, behavioral health, vision, and pharmacy services to residents regardless of ability to pay. It is located at 315 W. Upton St., Baldwin, MI 49304; phone 231-745-9766.

FiveCAP provides emergency assistance, food access, utility and energy support, and poverty-reduction services for individuals and families. The Baldwin office is located at 2476 W. 44th St., Baldwin, MI 49304; phone 231-745-4617.

Communities Overcoming Violent Encounters offers crisis intervention, advocacy, shelter, and support services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. The Lake County office can be reached at 231-745-8122, with a 24-hour crisis line at 1-800-950-5808.

Lake County Community Collaborative is a countywide coalition focused on child abuse prevention, youth development, family resilience, and community safety education, with services coordinated through partner agencies.

Animal Welfare and Volunteer Support

Lake County Animal Shelter Volunteers supports animal welfare through fundraising, adoption events, community education, and assistance with shelter operations. The volunteer group can be reached through the Baldwin shelter at 231-745-3079.

History, Culture and Education

Lake County Historical Society preserves and interprets Lake County history through museum exhibits, archives, educational programming, and community events. It is located at 915 Michigan Ave., Baldwin, MI 49304; phone 231-898-6500.

TEEM Center is a volunteer-led nonprofit providing training, education, mentoring, and skill-building programs for youth and families. It is located at 19 Joy, Idlewild, MI 49642; phone 231-745-4331.

Civic, Business and Economic Development

Lake County Chamber of Commerce supports local businesses and economic vitality through networking, promotion, and community events. It is located at 895 Michigan Ave., Suite C, Baldwin, MI 49304; phone 989-320-4085.

Lake County Economic Development Alliance is a volunteer-led organization focused on business development, workforce attraction, and long-term economic growth strategies. It can be reached at 231-742-3328.

Fraternal, Veterans and Service Organizations

American Legion Post 273 provides veterans support services, youth programs, scholarships, community events, and patriotic observances. The post is located at 111 S. Michigan Ave., Baldwin, MI 49304; phone 231-745-4631.

VFW Post 5315 2225 M-37 Baldwin, is a volunteer-run veterans organization supporting military families and local community projects; phone 231-745-7611.

Luther Lions Club is a civic service organization dedicated to volunteerism, fundraising, and community improvement projects serving the Luther area. The club can be reached at 231-590-0594.

AMVETS Post 1988 operates as both a veterans service organization and a social club, hosting community events, dinners, and fundraisers while supporting veterans and local causes.



Food Access and Community Support

Bread of Life Food Pantry operates a volunteer-led food pantry serving individuals and families in the Baldwin area. It is located at 740 9th St. Baldwin, MI 49304; phone 231-745-2622. At that same address there is a baby pantry called Grandmother's Cupboard Baby Pantry.

Lake Fellowship Ministries is an interdenominational network of churches coordinating cooperative outreach efforts, including food assistance, emergency aid, and community support delivered through participating congregations.



Social and Interest-Specific Clubs

Lake County Sportsman's Club is a volunteer-run membership organization based in Baldwin that brings together residents interested in outdoor recreation, hunting, shooting sports, and firearm safety through meetings, range activities, education, and social events.

Rotary Club of Baldwin is a service-oriented social club whose members meet regularly to carry out community improvement projects while fostering professional networking and fellowship.

Lake County 4-H Clubs offer interest-specific youth clubs and special-interest groups focused on hands-on learning, leadership development, and social engagement for youth across Lake County.

Lake County Garden Club is a social and interest-based gardening club where members collaborate on garden projects, share knowledge, and contribute produce to community food programs.



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Blessing of the Bikes: Faith, Community and the Open Road

BALDWIN, Mich. — Each spring, the roar of motorcycle engines signals the start of riding season in Lake County as thousands of riders converge on Baldwin for the annual **Blessing of the Bikes**, one of the region's largest and longest-running events.

Held annually in mid-May, the multi-day gathering blends faith, safety and festival atmosphere, drawing motorcyclists from across Michigan and beyond. What began in 1972 as a small blessing at St. Ann's Catholic Church has grown into a weekend-long celebration that fills downtown Baldwin and surrounding areas with bikes, vendors and live entertainment.

The centerpiece of the weekend is the Sunday blessing ceremony, when riders line up to have

their motorcycles blessed ahead of the summer riding season. The ceremony emphasizes safe travel and remembrance, and it remains a defining tradition even as the event has expanded in size and scope.

Beyond the blessing itself, the weekend includes vendor booths, food concessions, live music, informal group rides and bike-related activities throughout the community. Local businesses, civic groups and volunteers play a central role, helping manage crowds and providing services as Baldwin's population swells for the event.

The festival is widely recognized as a major economic driver for Lake County, bringing early-season tourism to hotels, restaurants and shops while reinforcing Baldwin's identity as

a motorcycle destination. Law enforcement and emergency services coordinate closely with organizers to manage traffic, parking and public safety during the peak days of the event.

While the scale has changed over the decades, organizers say the purpose has remained consistent: offering riders a moment of reflection and community before heading out on the open road for another season.

The Blessing of the Bikes is typically held in and around downtown Baldwin and nearby venues, with exact schedules and locations announced each spring.



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blessings

troutarama

Trout-A-Rama: Casting Lines and Celebrating Community

Each spring, Baldwin marks the opening of Michigan's trout season. Anglers gather before dawn along the Pere Marquette and nearby streams on opening day, continuing a decades-long ritual that has made the village a regional destination for trout fishing. The river's cold, clear waters and reputation as one of Michigan's premier trout streams have long drawn fishermen from across the state and beyond.

A multi-day community celebration that combines this fishing tradition with family-friendly events and small-town pageantry happens in July.



Trout-A-Rama has a full weekend schedule of community events. A signature feature of Trout-A-Rama is the **Saturday parade through downtown Baldwin**, which typically includes local civic groups, school organizations, first responders, businesses and themed entries celebrating fishing, spring and community pride. The parade serves as a focal point of the weekend, drawing residents and visitors alike into the village center.

Throughout the weekend, downtown Baldwin hosts food vendors, live entertainment and family activities, creating a festival atmosphere that extends beyond the riverbanks. Community gatherings and informal social events round out the schedule making



Trout-A-Rama's roots closely tied to Baldwin's development and Lake County's natural resources. Trout fishing helped put Baldwin on the map in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as rail access and tourism brought anglers to the area's rivers and streams. Over time, the opening day of trout season evolved from a sporting event into a this broader community celebration, reflecting both the economic importance of outdoor recreation and the cultural role fishing plays in local life.

For local businesses, Trout-A-Rama also signals the start of the summer tourism season. Shops, restaurants and lodging establishments see the weekend as a way for anglers and festivalgoers to plan to return later in the year for fishing, paddling, camping and other outdoor pursuits.

More than a single weekend, Trout-A-Rama highlights the enduring connection between Baldwin, Lake County and the trout waters that flow through them. As lines are cast on the Pere Marquette in April and the parade moves down Main Street in July, the event underscores how outdoor tradition and community celebration come together each spring in **Baldwin**.




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pure markette



Pure Markette: A Community Market at the Heart of Lake County

The **Pure Markette** has emerged as a central gathering place in Lake County, blending a seasonal farmers and makers market with broader goals tied to food access, community connection and local economic development.

Founded as a volunteer-run initiative, Pure Markette operates during the warmer months in downtown Baldwin and brings together farmers, artisan makers, community organizations and residents in a weekly market setting. While not yet a year-round operation, organizers say the Markette has become a consistent draw for both locals and visitors, strengthening downtown activity and expanding access to fresh, locally produced food.

At its core, the Markette focuses on increasing the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in a rural county that has historically faced barriers to food access, while also supporting small

businesses, farms and brick-and-mortar retailers throughout the region.

Community impact and 2026 expansion plans

According to organizers, the Markette's community reach continues to expand, with several initiatives planned for the 2026 season.

Among the developments is an expansion of the **FARMACY Rx Produce Prescription Program**, a partnership with **Family Health Care** and **District Health Department 10**, which allows health care providers to prescribe fresh produce as part of preventive care. The Markette also plans to continue and grow its **Power of Produce (POP) Club Children's Passport Program**, supported through a partnership with **Lake-Osceola State Bank**, encouraging children to engage



While seasonal, Pure Markette has become a visible symbol of Lake County's broader efforts to link food access, downtown vitality and economic development. Organizers say the market's growth and partnerships position it as both a community asset and a storytelling platform—one that reflects ongoing efforts to shape Lake County's future while remaining rooted in local relationships and volunteer leadership.

with healthy foods and local vendors.

Additional plans include a grant-funded transportation program to provide free rides to the market, weekly live entertainment, and more than 75 volunteer-hosted special events, programs, classes and do-it-yourself activities. These offerings are developed in collaboration with more than 30 community partners across Lake County and the surrounding region.

Beyond commerce, organizers describe Pure Markette as a community gathering space designed to help residents and visitors "Discover, Explore and Connect" with local people, organizations and natural resources. That emphasis, often referred to as Economic Development Collaboration, positions the market as both a social and economic catalyst.

The Markette is operated entirely by volunteers and funded through community support, sponsorships and partnerships. Organizers say the relationships built through the market have played a role in advancing other community-wide initiatives now underway in Baldwin and across Lake County.

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Lake County on the National Stage

People and places whose influence reached beyond the county

Lake County's history includes individuals and communities whose lives and achievements extended far beyond its borders, shaping national culture, law, conservation, and environmental awareness. While small in population, the county's reach has been significant at key moments in American history.

Editorial note: *This list highlights selected individuals and places associated with Lake County whose lives or achievements reached beyond the local level. It is not intended to be exhaustive. Lake County's history includes many additional residents, veterans, artists, civic leaders, educators, and community builders whose contributions were significant locally and, in some cases, regionally or nationally. Inclusion here reflects available documentation, historical records, and space considerations rather than a measure of relative importance.*

A National Cultural Destination: Idlewild

During the mid-20th century, **Idlewild** emerged as one of the most significant African American resort and entertainment communities in the United States. At a time when segregation limited travel and performance opportunities, Idlewild became a nationally known destination for leisure, culture, and economic opportunity. Nationally renowned performers who appeared in Idlewild included **Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Count Basie, and Della Reese**. While these artists were not Lake County natives, Idlewild's prominence firmly placed the county on the national cultural map.

Individuals With National or International Recognition

• Andy Horujko

A native of Chase, Horujko gained international attention in the early 1970s after walking roughly 12,000 miles from Anchorage, Alaska, to Tierra del Fuego without accepting motorized transportation. His journey was undertaken to raise awareness about the environmental and health impacts of automotive emissions. Letters, journals, and artifacts from his walk are preserved locally.



• Ray Scott

Founder of the Bass Anglers Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.), Scott spent formative time in Baldwin. His work helped shape modern competitive bass fishing and conservation

ethics, influencing outdoor sports at a national and international level.

• Ernie Harwell

The longtime and celebrated voice of the Detroit Tigers, Harwell maintained personal ties to northern Michigan and is frequently associated with the Baldwin area in regional histories. His broadcasting career earned national recognition and Baseball Hall of Fame honors.

• Luther Halsey Gulick

A nationally influential educator and reformer in physical education and recreation, Gulick spent time in northern Michigan, including Lake County. His work helped shape youth development and public health initiatives across the United States.

Civil War, Civil Rights, and Legal History

• Moses Frasier

Moses Frasier was an African American Civil War veteran



who later lived in Lake County. His postwar presence reflects the broader movement of Black veterans seeking land, opportunity, and stability in northern Michigan, linking the county directly to the national story of emancipation and citizenship.

• Percy J. Langster

Langster served as Lake County prosecutor from 1949 to 1950 and is recognized as the **first African American elected prosecuting attorney in the United States**. His election, rooted in the civic life of Idlewild and greater Lake County, stands as a milestone in national legal and civil rights history.

A County With Reach

Together, these individuals and places illustrate Lake County's distinctive legacy: a rural community shaped by global journeys, cultural landmarks, and historic firsts whose influence extended well beyond county lines.



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calendar



Lake County Calendar of Events — 2026

Dates and details may change due to weather, permitting, or printing deadlines.

ONGOING & SEASONAL EVENTS

- **PURE** Markette – Wednesdays, June–August, 3–6 p.m., downtown Baldwin
- **SOUNDS** of the Forest / Echo Through the Timber Concert Series – Wednesdays and Saturdays, mid-June through late August, Baldwin
- **FOLK** Fridays (presented by the Lake County Historical Society) – Fridays, summer months, locations vary



JANUARY 2026

- **JAN.** 28 – Pure Markette Vendor Kickoff, Baldwin

LATE MAY / EARLY JUNE 2026

- **IDLEWILD** Cultural and Heritage Center – Opens for the season (late May), Idlewild
- **SHRINE** of the Pines – Opens for the season (late May or early June), near Baldwin
- **LAKE** County Historical Society – Summer programming season begins (late spring)
- **WILLIAMS** Island (Idlewild) – Seasonal programming begins (late spring)



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MAY 2026

- **MAY 14-17** – Baldwin Blessing Fest, Baldwin

JUNE 2026

- **JUNE 9-13** – Midwest Jet Pilots Spring Fling, Baldwin RC Park
- **JUNE 25-28** – Irons Flea Roast and Ox Market, Irons
- **JUNE 27-28** – Live at Idlewild, 6437 S. Nelson Road, Idlewild

JULY 2026

- **JULY 1-4** – Luther Logging Days, Luther
- **JULY 4** – Grier Music Fest, Meeks Park, Idlewild

- **JULY 4** – Idlewild Fourth of July Parade, Idlewild

- **JULY 7-11** – West Michigan RC Expo, Baldwin RC Park



AUGUST 2026

- **JULY 15-18** – Baldwin Troutarama, Baldwin
- **CHASE** Pickle Fest – August (dates vary), Chase
- **IDLEWILD** Kids Fest – Weekends in August, Idlewild
- **AUG. 11-15** – Midwest Jet Pilots Boondoggle, Baldwin RC Park

SEPTEMBER 2026

- **SEPT. 11-13** – West Michigan Fun-Fly, Baldwin RC Park
- **IDLEWILD** HalloBoo! – Weekends, mid-September through October, Idlewild



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FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 231.354.2424 OR VISIT ONLINE AT: LAKECOUNTSPORTSMANSClub.COM PO BOX 303, BALDWIN, MI 49304

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SEASONAL / COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

- **TEEM** Center Movie Nights – Seasonal community movie nights, Idlewild (dates vary)

EDITOR'S NOTE:

This calendar reflects annually recurring events and typical seasonal programming in Lake County. Readers are encouraged to confirm final dates, times and locations with event organizers.



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demographics

Lake County Demographics

Figures are based on the most recent U.S. Census Bureau and American Community Survey estimates.

Population & Households

- Population: Approximately 13,000
- Population density: About 22 people per square mile
- Median age: 50.3 years
- Households: About 4,900
- Average household size: About 2.5 people
- Homeownership rate: More than 80%



Age Distribution

- Under 18: About 18%
- Ages 18-24: About 6%
- Ages 25-44: About 19%
- Ages 45-64: About 29%
- Age 65 and older: About 26%

Income & Housing

- Median household income: About \$49,700
- Per capita income: About \$27,300
- Residents living below poverty level: Approximately 16%
- Median home value: About \$123,000

Race and Ethnicity

- White (non-Hispanic): About 79%
- Black or African American: About 8%
- Hispanic or Latino (any race): About 7%
- Two or more races: About 5%
- Other races: About 1%

Context

- Lake County is among Michigan's most rural counties.
- Roughly one in four residents is age 65 or older, contributing to the county's high median age.
- English is the primary language spoken in most households.



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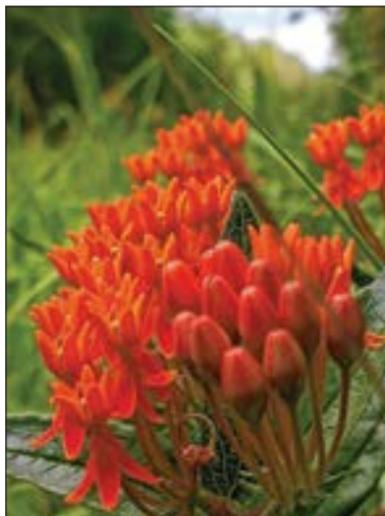
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