

# History of the East Lake Community

Through Alabama Historical Commission Historical Markers

## East Lake Community

LOCATION: 7700 block of First Avenue North, near corner of 77<sup>th</sup> Street North and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North

In 1992 a historical marker recounting the history of the east Lake area was placed in the 7700 block of First Avenue North by the Alabama Historical Commission, the City of Birmingham and the South East Lake Neighborhood Association.

The Creek Indian Cession of 1814 opened this section of Alabama to settlement. At the time of statehood in 1819 many pioneer families had located here in what later became known as Jones Valley. By 1820 the area was called Ruhama Valley as a result of the religious fervor of Hosea Holcomb who preached mercy or "Ruhamah." As early as 1839 a post office named Rockville was established for the local community.

Major growth came in 1886 as a result of the promotion of the East Lake Land Company by Robert Jemison Sr. to provide housing sites for the miners drawn to the booming iron ore industry in Birmingham. Lots 50 feet wide and 180 feet long were laid out on 2,000 acres between what is now 69th Street to 85th Street and 5th Avenue North and 5th Avenue South. Development was dependent on the East Lake Railroad which began operating on October 8, 1887. On this site a car barn was built to house the equipment of the 21 steam locomotives operating between downtown Birmingham and the East Lake terminus at 83rd Street.

The town of East Lake was incorporated December 13, 1900. As a result of the street car the business district developed rapidly. On January 1, 1910 East Lake was incorporated into the City of Birmingham but it has remained a distinctive community.

Source: Alabama Historical Commission [www.preserveal.org](http://www.preserveal.org)



## East Lake Land Company

LOCATION: Can be reached from 1st Avenue North (U.S. 11) south of 83rd Street North, Birmingham, Alabama, in the park near the lake on the east side.

East Lake was planned in 1886 by the East Lake Land Company to help sell home sites to the men who came in the 1870's to work in Birmingham's steel industry. First named Lake Como, after the lake in the Italian Alps, it soon came to be called East Lake. Using water from Roebuck Springs & Village Creek this 45 acre man-made lake, within a 100 acre park, enhanced the area by providing a year round pleasure resort. In a short time East Lake Park became a major recreational center of the Birmingham area & in 1887 a street car line was run out to the park. Among the amusements offered at the park through the years were a ferris wheel, a shooting gallery, boating, fishing, swimming, water skiing, golf, baseball, a steamboat, a zoo, & band concerts & other entertainment in the pavilion. The City of Birmingham purchased the park in 1917 & today, East Lake Park is one of the largest municipal recreational facilities in Alabama. (Erected 1991 by the City of Birmingham)

Source: Alabama Historical Commission [www.preserveal.org](http://www.preserveal.org)