



# The tale of **Effie Lee Wilson**

When Stephen White, a minister and caretaker, tried to save Holland Island in the early 2000's, he found a broken grave marker for Effie Wilson, a 13 year old girl who did not want to be forgotten. He was touched by this, because she had been forgotten, as the island was sinking into the bay and little remained of her history. Despite the best efforts of Stephen White and a few locals, the last house on Holland Island, a landmark for watermen and an icon of the region, fell in 2010. During high tide, the island is completely submerged.

The story of Effie Lee doesn't need to be about her death, but about her beautiful life

She lived during the peak of Holland Island when life would have seemed perfect and it was called the "Paradise of the Chesapeake." New trains meant islanders could make a living off the seafood in the area and the island prospered and grew.

Effie Lee would have gone to a one room school, with about 50 students of different grade levels, and one teacher. There were about 30 homes along the western ridge with a view of the sunset and candles lit the windows in the evening. There was one church they would attend each Sunday and one doctor who would care for their needs. There was a hall for social gatherings where men would meet and the ladies would gather for quilting parties in their homes. In the summer they played basketball with teams on the mainland. Dancing would have been popular at the time as would ice cream socials. Children would laugh and roll hoops down white oyster shell roads. And along the water would be piers with a large fleets of work boats including 50 skipjacks.

But their island was made of sand and clay and not rock. In the early 1900's they tried in vain to fight the rain and tides with large rocks and barrier walls. By 1920, all permanent residents of Holland Island had moved their homes or left. They moved to Cambridge or Crisfield but nearby islands struggled with the same issues.

Today Smith Island, Tangier Island, and many others struggle to save their coastlines and unique island cultures. Stephen White knows the work can not be done alone. The Army Corps of Engineers has helped, but there is still much we don't know about the rhythm of nature and the dynamics of our watershed. In some places in the Chesapeake bay and along the Atlantic Coast, islands are created for shorebirds and waterfowl. Clean, quiet beaches are needed for their nesting grounds but these islands need protection too and can fall to the rains and tides. For this reason there is much debate over what can or should be done.

## What can YOU do?

Share Effie Lee's story! Get people talking about the erosion and sea level rise. Help keep our water clean of trash and pollutants that would harm our coastal marshes and damage the root structures that keep our coastlines in place. Support oyster reef construction because hard foundations can help break the waves and save coastlines as well.

I encourage you to search online for the information stated here, learn about the Chesapeake watershed and our sinking islands, and get involved. Check out resources on erosion and sea level rise. There is also an interesting history of the geology of our bay, including ice age glaciers and a bollide event which occurred 35 million years ago.

**For more fun, follow [Facebook.com/ChesapeakeMermaid](https://www.facebook.com/ChesapeakeMermaid)**



  
The  
Chesapeake  
Mermaid.com

The  
Chesapeake  
Mermaid.com



In Memory of



**EFFIE L. WILSON.**

Daughter of  
John W. & Anne A.  
Wilson

Born Jan. 16, 1880

Died Oct 12, 1893

AGED

13 Yrs. 8 Mo's. & 27 D's



*Forget me not, is all I ask  
I could not ask for more,  
Than to be cherished by my friends  
So loving and so dear.  
Dearest Effie, thou hast left us,  
And our loss we deeply feel.  
But tis God that has bereft us  
He will all our sorrows heal.*



# Creating a replica tomb stone

- We used a 12x17 cardboard shipping box - the kind you can get at the post office.
- A template of her stone has been provided, created at actual size. You may need to print it out in two pieces if you only have 8 1/2x 11 paper.
- Open one end of the shipping box and lay out the flaps to form a stand up base. Tape in place.
- Use a piece of foam core to cut out the arch area with her name and the dove. We used an x-acto blade. Kids get an adult to help you with sharp objects. The dove will fall out of the arch and needs to be glued in place independently. Try not to lose the dove while cutting or cleaning up scraps.
- Glue this piece of foam and the dove to the box in alignment with the template. Let dry.
- If you want a crack in your stone, cut a jagged line into the box using the template as a guide.
- Use a scrap piece of cardboard inside the box to line the crack so you can't see inside. Lay the stone face down and put a heavy book onto the cardboard while it dries to be certain it doesn't curl away from the crack. Let dry.
- Once your stone is dry, you are ready to paint. We used layers of black, dark gray and light gray textured, spray paint available at most hardware stores. Let dry between colors. Allow the paint to run or mix as this will make your stone look authentic and aged.
- For the lettering, I used a fine sharpie marker. You can either cut out the letters on your paper template and use as a stencil - full or partially - or freehand the letters onto your stone. Either way, I'm sure it will look fantastic. Add dried moss or leaves at the base to blend into the ground.

## Effie's portrait and the last house on Holland Island

- To accent your tombstone, I've included our original artwork of Effie Lee Wilson and the last house on Holland Island. Print these 5x7 images and add them to frames of your choice. We hope this will add depth to your story and invite children to ask more questions.



**For more fun, follow [Facebook.com/ChesapeakeMermaid](https://www.facebook.com/ChesapeakeMermaid)**