

Vanishing Islands of the Bay

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Built in 1888, this Victorian home from a different era has braved the elements and fought shoreline erosion on Holland Island in Chesapeake Bay for well over a century. Holland Island is not unique and many islands in the Bay are meeting the same fate.

Despite former resident and owner Stephen White's best efforts to save the house and protect the island, the waters would overcome both the house and the island and erased them from the map.



Early History

Holland Island was originally settled in the 1600's and for nearly two hundred years life was largely uneventful for the small island, with a small colony settlement occupying the shores.



In the 1850s a small fishing and farming boom in the Chesapeake area brought many to the islands in the Bay including **Poplar Island** and Holland Islands. By 1910 the Holland Island housed nearly 360 residents, making Holland the most populated island in Chesapeake Bay.

At its peak, Holland Island was a thriving community. It had nearly 70 structures including homes and shops, a school, post office, several general stores, and a church. The island also had its own doctor, a community center, and even a baseball team that would travel by boat for away games.

Geography & Erosion

A unique feature to the islands in Chesapeake Bay is the composition of mud and silt rather than rock; this makes many islands like Holland Island, **Poplar Island**, Hart-Miller Island, Smith Island, and Tangier Island, in the Chesapeake Bay more susceptible to shoreline erosion from exposure to crashing waves. Additionally, Sea Level Rise and development has further accelerated the erosion process for the islands of Chesapeake Bay.

Holland Island started to noticeably lose shoreline in 1914. The residents tried desperately to save their island by importing stones to build walls and in some cases sinking boats in an attempt to slow the erosion, but all attempts failed.

This rapid erosion forced most residents of Holland to tear down their homes and relocate to the mainland. Some stayed and took their chances, but a tropical storm in 1918 was the final straw for those that tried to tough it out.

Shrinking Island

In 1999, the Maryland governor appointed a task force to study the erosion issues affecting Chesapeake Bay. In 2000, the task force released the report which revealed that **“the state of Maryland loses approximately 260 acres of tidal shoreline due to erosion each year.”**



From 1915 to 2005, Holland Island went from 160 acres to 80 acres. In 2003, Hurricane Isabel hit Holland Island destroying 60% of the remaining trees and sealed the Islands fate.



Collapse

In mid-October of 2010, the last house on Holland Island succumbed to the elements. After 125 years of braving the elements, the Victorian home crumbled. Over the next several months the water re-claimed the wreckage and by 2012 the island had completely eroded away.

Open water where the last house on
Holland Island once stood.

