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# A Pictorial History of the Houses in Rich's Cove, Isle au Haut, Maine

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# A Pictorial History of the Houses in Rich's Cove Isle au Haut, Maine

Compiled and edited by  
Janet Barter, October 2009

## Introduction

The purpose for writing this brief paper is to supplement another work completed in 1970 by Floyd W. Rich, *Isle au Haut, Maine: A History of Homes in the Rich's Cove, Formerly Douglas Cove Area*.



**Rich's Cove ca. 1880's**  
Turner Family Papers (MS511)  
Courtesy of Special Collections,  
Raymond H. Folger Library, University of Maine

“Breeze Cottage” is located in Rich's Cove on Isle au Haut, Maine. Marion Breeze-Williams, a present owner who rented the cottage to me in September 2008, suggested I read the “little red book” in the sitting room. In addition to general information for guests, there was a letter from Floyd W. Rich to Kenneth W. Breeze (Marion's father), and an essay written by Mr. Rich about the history of the houses in the cove. As an amateur genealogist, I already knew a bit about the past inhabitants, but I was unable to associate the houses Mr. Rich described with those in the cove.

Wayne Barter, who has lived most of his life on Isle au Haut, came over one evening and drew a map to straighten me out and I have used his map in assembling this history. Wayne is the nephew of Cecil Barter, a much later owner of the cottage. The map on page 3 is taken from *Rich Family of Isle au Haut, Maine*, researched by Floyd W. Rich and compiled by his son Norman Wesley Rich. I've added red text to that map to name early owners of each house and color to the road for emphasis.



**Breeze Cottage, 2008**

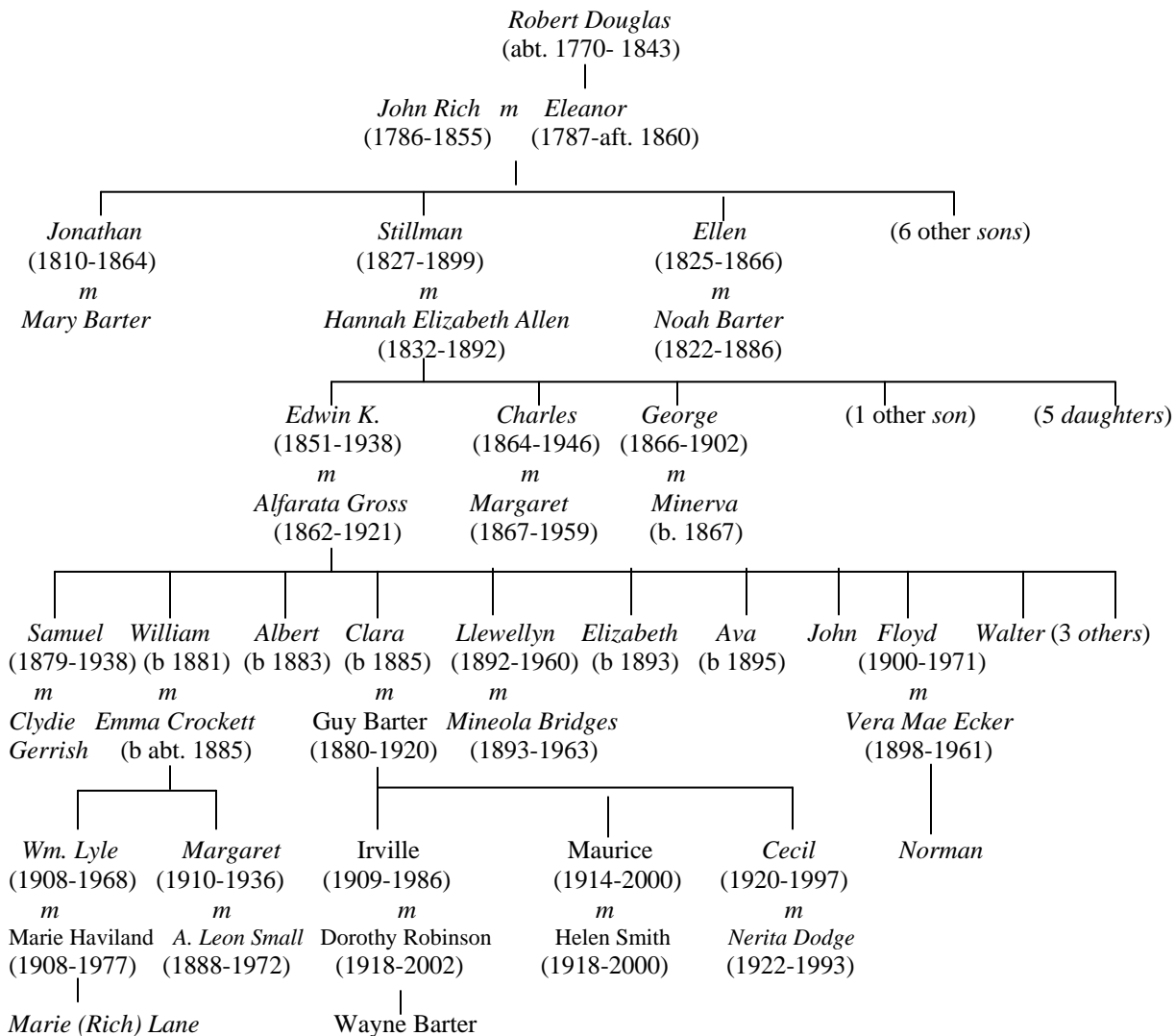
The map on page 4 shows the lot divisions and owners around the northern portion of Isle au Haut, taken from the entire map of Isle au Haut, surveyed by Lothrop Lewis in 1803 and annotated through 1824.

I have attempted to keep Mr. Rich's text and the placement of asterisks as it appeared in the original document. Annotated photos and my comments, shown in brackets, are for clarification to Mr. Rich's essay. The Rich family tree following this introduction shows those members mentioned by Mr. Rich and some Barter connections I thought appropriate.

I want to acknowledge and thank fellow genealogist and Rich family researcher, Ingrid Luke, for generously sharing her knowledge of the inhabitants of this special place in Isle au Haut.

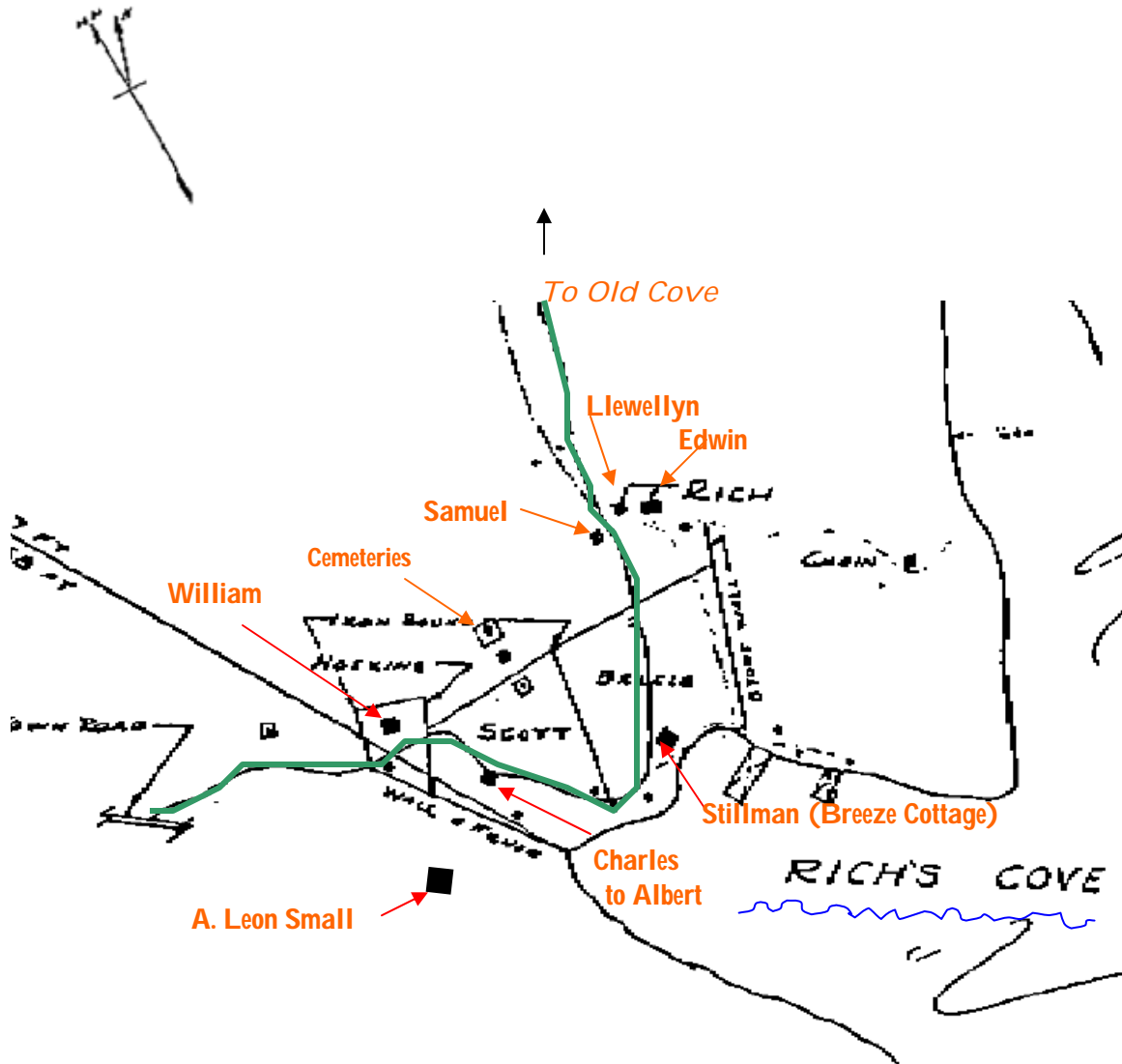
## Early Occupants of Houses in Rich's Cove

(People who lived in the homes at one time or another shown in italics)



## Detail of Rich's Cove

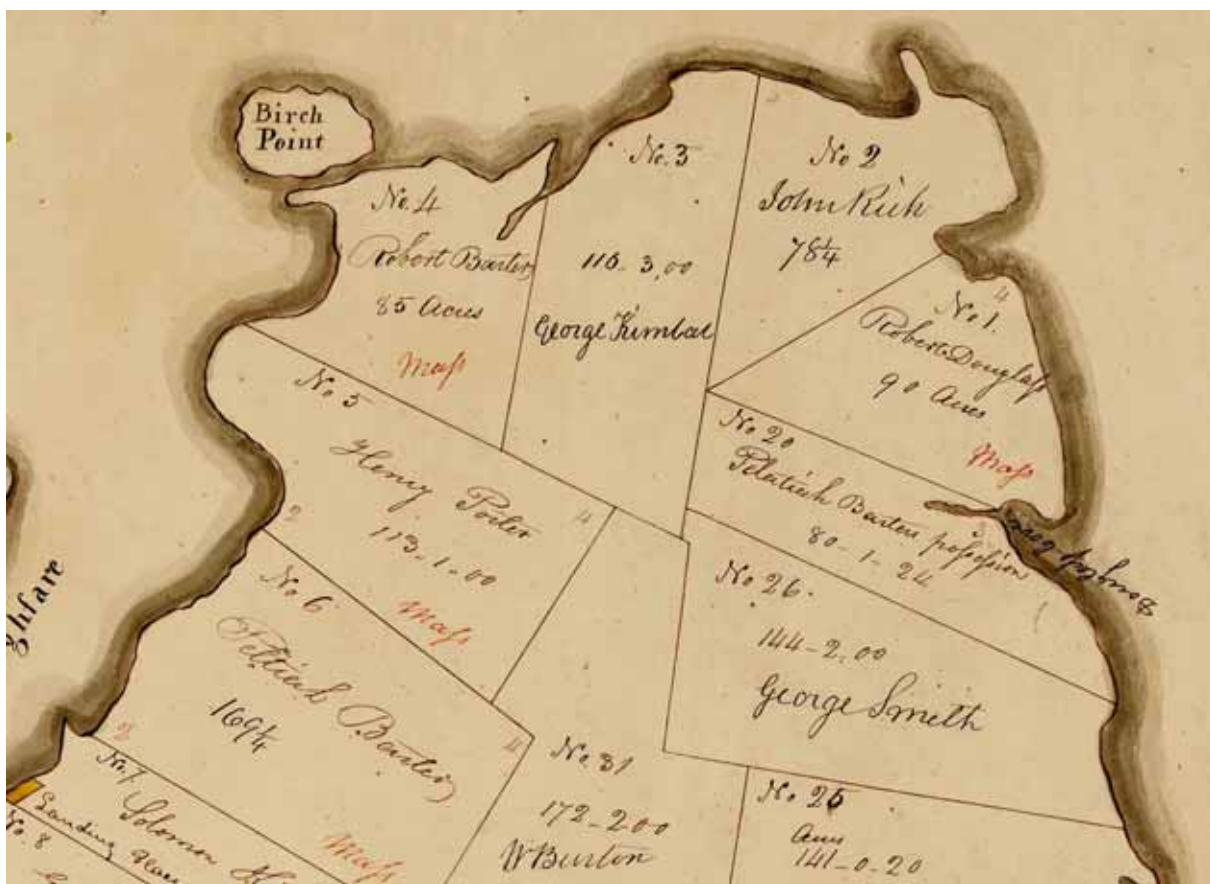
[Original sketch from *Rich Family of Isle au Haut, Maine* with names added]



### Notes:

1. A brook flows between the "A. Leon Small" house and that of "Albert Rich"
2. The docks shown are no longer standing and two small fish shacks on the shore are in the process of decay. (See page 17 for photos)
3. The cemeteries are partially in the Peter Scott property.

## Owners of Northern Lots in Isle au Haut



North Section of *Plan of Isle au Haut Division, 1803*,  
surveyed by Lothrop Lewis with names updated in 1824

[Looking at the map above, we can see that lot *No. 1* is bordered by two coves; the north cove is now known as *Old Cove* and the south cove shown as *Douglass Cove* on the map, is now known as *Rich's Cove*, where Breeze Cottage is located.

Robert Douglas settled on Isle au Haut sometime between 1796 and 1817 (Sam'l Pickering sold to Robert Douglass, Jr. 100 acres for \$26 on 5 Mar 1796; this appears to have been land on the west side of Isle au Haut). Robert officially received title to lot *No. 1* from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts on June 2, 1817 and recorded on September 1, 1826. He paid \$75.90 for 90 acres. Records show in later years, Robert Douglas dropped the suffix *Jr.* after he named a son Robert.

John Rich settled on lot *No. 2*. The earliest tax record for him was in 1815. He married Eleanor Douglas, most likely Robert's daughter. It was on this lot that their nine children were born. At some point the lot was either divided in half or sold entirely (deed not found) but William Barter became an owner. He declared bankruptcy in August of 1841 and "half" of lot *No 2* was sold to his son William Barter, Jr. On November 12, 1846, William Barter, Jr. sold half of *No 2* to Stillman Rich, son of John Rich, land which the deed stated that John Rich occupied.

Robert Douglas sold lot *No. 1* for \$150 to one of his grandsons, Jonathan Rich (another John Rich son) on September 19, 1842. Jonathan and wife Mary (William Barter's daughter) were already living in a home on the west side of the island. Jonathan sold lot *No. 1* for \$250 in February 1850 to his youngest brother, Stillman and brother-in-law Noah Barter. Noah, wife Ellen (Rich) and their two children were living in the house by September 1850. They were apparently quite close to Stillman (their son was also named Stillman). Stillman and Hannah (Hannah Allen as of September 1850, US Federal Census) were still living with his father, John Rich on lot *No. 2*.

The Stillman Rich and Noah Barter families, totaling 9 persons, were living together in the Rich's Cove house (Breeze Cottage!) by 1855. Records show both men taxed equally for the property: 45 acres, ½ a house, and ½ a barn.

Apparently, Stillman and Noah didn't make their mortgage payments. Another deed for lot *No. 1* was drawn up by Jonathan in 1863 (thirteen years after the first deed). This new deed omitted Noah Barter and the property sold again for \$250 to Stillman Rich. Noah had purchased a house and land in 1857 from Daniel Gilbert and may have moved from Rich's Cove in that same year. Their son Stillman was known in 1860 by his middle name Edgar, which may or may not indicate some friction between the families. Noah and Eleanor (Ellen) are buried in the Rich family cemetery indicating that they still had lived nearby (more discussion about the Rich's Cove house on page 10).

Lothrop Lewis's map states that lot *No. 20* was *possessed* by Peletiah, but as of October 2009 I have yet to find the deed; Peletiah was taxed as early as 1795, which may have included *No. 20* but his homestead was on lot *No. 6* on the Thoroughfare. *No. 20* later came into the possession of Thomas Tyler (probably the "Master Tyler" that Floyd Rich mentions in the essay to follow) who probably built the house that Hiram Small later purchased with the lot. A. Leon Small, a grandson of Hiram and Susan (Barter) Small, eventually became the owner of the property.] JB

Floyd W. Rich begins his description at the northern end of Rich's Cove, winds south and then northwest on the unpaved road until coming to the main road.]

**Copied from Floyd W. Rich's *Isle au Haut, Maine: A History of Homes in the Rich's Cove, Formerly Douglas Cove Area:***

...The house in which I was born 70 years ago last month is located approximately 100 yards up the field at the head of the Cove. This house was built in 1879 for my Father [Edwin Rich], I believe by Mr. Clarence Turner. Information has been passed down through the family and related to me by my sister, Ava Rich, that the first meal served in this house was Thanksgiving Dinner in the year 1879. The first child born in this house to Edwin and Alfarata Gross Rich was named Samuel Edwin. He arrived in the new home December 6, 1879.



Edwin Rich's house, 2008, looking north

As I look back from this year 1970, the house has no distinguishing architectural features but for many years it teemed with life. In addition to Samuel Edwin there was born to my parents twelve other children between the years 1879 and 1904.

A large portion of the island is made up of black granite, high in iron, which no one has been able to cut or break with the usual tools available for that purpose, a drill, hammer and wedges. Fortunately some good cutable [sic] granite boulders were on the lot, and from indications, the foundation stones were cut from these. Presumably, the lumber was boated in from Deer Isle or possibly from Ellsworth.



[Labeled "Uncle Ed Rich and Grandpa Davis", with Breeze Cottage behind, this photograph was copied from the "little red book"] JB

At my father's death, the house became the property of my sister and brother, Ava and Walter Rich. Ava is the present [1970] owner and occupant during the milder months of the year.

Across the yard from the Edwin Rich home is located the home of the late Llewellyn and Mineola (Bridges) Rich. Just when this place was built is not known to the writer. In my earliest memory it was a shed or a barn. When my next to oldest brother William (Willie) was married in 1906, he converted it into a home where was born his three children. When Willie and his wife Emma with their 3 children moved to their new home, this place was taken over by Samuel (Sammie) and Llewellyn as bachelor quarters.



This was around 1912. As Llewellyn was the first to marry, Sammie was nudged out. The house with many additions was the home of Llewellyn and Mineola until their death in 1960 and 1963. It is now [1970] owned by Ava Rich.

[Marie (Rich) Lane, one owner of the property, said that the Llewellyn house was partly on a foundation of straw, indicating that a portion might have previously been used for a barn, before becoming part of a home.] JB



[Looking southwest, the Breeze Cottage roof is just visible between Llewellyn and Samuel's houses.] JB

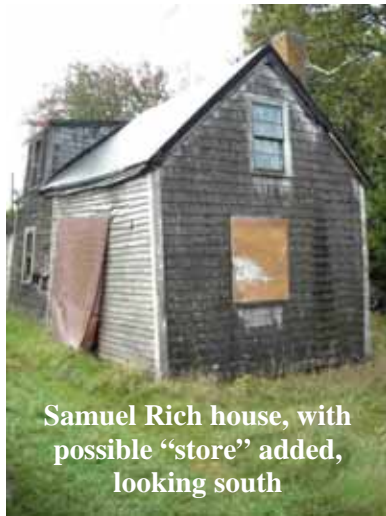


Over the ledges and across the yard from the Edwin Rich house is another with some history. This was built for a stable by or for Sammie Rich when he lived at home [Edwin Rich house] and operated a store at the Thoroughfare, formerly known as the Jim Barter Store [not shown]. It was located on the property up the hill from the present Town Landing adjacent to the present [1970] French's summer home. When Sammie gave up the store at the Village, he had a small operation in this building with gasoline, etc. at the wharf [in Rich's Cove]. When work away from the island or the Sea called him, my mother took over the operation of the store for a few years.



Samuel Rich house, 2008, (right) looking north

In 1922, Sammie returned to the island and married Clydie Gerrish. They converted the store into a home which they occupied until his death in 1938. It is now [1970] owned by his widow, Clydie.



Samuel Rich house, with possible "store" added, looking south

[I was unable to positively determine if the "Jim Barter store" was dismantled, then brought over to the east side for Samuel's operation at the wharf, to be subsequently moved again and incorporated into a home. The photo below shows the wharf sometime between 1910 and 1920. The building at right in the photo may have been the store, later used in Sammie's house. Marie (Rich) Lane, owner of the property, did not know the complete history as of 2008 and there are few left who might know.] JB



Turner Family Papers (MS511), courtesy of Special Collections, Raymond H. Folger Library, University of Maine



Stillman Rich's house (Breeze Cottage), 2008,  
looking south

The house by the shore at the head of the cove [Breeze Cottage] has a history which I am not fully able to recount, but I will give the best information that I do have. Who built the house and when?

This past fall, I found in the Revere Memorial Library, a reference to the first settlers by Capt. William Turner and dated February 26, 1877. "The first settlers were Pelatiah Barter, Henry Barter 1792, and later William Barter. The next permanent settlers were Mr. Robert Douglas and Abiaba Smith. Mr. Douglas settled in

what is now known as Stillman Rich's Cove and built there the house where Mr. Rich now lives and that was the first frame house on the east side of the island." Mr. Turner went on to state that "Mr. Douglas and Mr. Smith came there about the year 1803." The writer accepted this date as the best information available until a cousin, Gladys Rich Partridge, (Mrs. Raymond Partridge of Hancock, Maine) who was born<sup>1</sup> in this house, sent a document in which Mr. Douglas was recognized as a settler on the Great Isle au Holt in 1802...

[I've omitted three paragraphs concerning the petition submitted sometime in 1801, a handwritten document made by the original settlers. Floyd W. Rich was correct in that Robert Douglas was one of the original settlers. I found the petition at the Revere Memorial Library on the island during my visit in 2008.] JB



...Now back to the house. Since Mr. Douglas was a settler prior to January 1802 it is possible that the house could have been built prior to that time but let us settle on built around 1800. In the United States Census of 1790 and 1800, Mr. Douglas was listed in Vinalhaven Town with a family. John Rich, my great grandfather married one daughter, Eleanor Douglas possibly around 1808 or 1810. I like the reference in Hosmer's *Historical Sketch of Deer Isle* and *A History of Swan's Island* by H. W. Small, MD (1898) that state "Mrs. Rich was a woman of prepossessing appearance".

<sup>1</sup>I assume that Mrs. Partridge was born here as it was her parents' home but she has advised me that she was born in Hancock, Maine. [FWR 1970]

John Rich built a house North and West of Riches Old Cove. I found the “Old cellar” as it has been known in my family all my lifetime, in the Fall of 1968. The cellar as well as the other stone wall in the area were in surprisingly good condition. I recall hearing my father telling that this house was torn down, the lumber hauled over the pasture road in the winter by oxteam, and used in the building of the house at the [Stillman Rich] Cove. Which house, I do not know. The fact that in my earliest memory there was no sign of lumber in the area but some plaster and broken bricks in the cellar could indicate that it was torn down and not left to rot and decay. I can only assume that Mr. John Rich raised his family at this location.

So Mr. Robert Douglas built and occupied the house at Douglas Cove. Whether or not Mr. John Rich lived here at anytime, I have no way to ascertain.

[In recent years, Wayne Barter has done some extensive work on Breeze Cottage and discovered numbers on the boards indicating that this house may have been disassembled at one time. He also found an 1824 newspaper within the insulation. These clues may indicate that this was the house that was moved from Old Cove. The 1850 census for Isle au Haut shows at least *two* houses in the area: that of John Rich in Old Cove and the one in which Noah and Ellen (Rich) Barter resided in Douglas Cove. If the house was moved before the census, it couldn't have been the one in which John Rich lived.] JB

In 1844, Mr. Douglas sold the property to his grandson Mr. Jonathan Rich, a son of Mr. John Rich. Records show that in 1850 [and 1863 according to Hancock deeds], Mr. Jonathan Rich sold it to a brother, Mr. Stillman Rich, my grandfather. My Father [Edwin K.] and his brothers and sisters were born here, the oldest, in 1851.



Stillman Rich and Hannah Allen Rich, grandfather and grandmother, lived here until their deaths, hers in 1893 and his in 1899. After my grandfather's death, my father's youngest brother, Uncle George Rich, acquired the property from the Stillman Rich heirs and lived here until his death in early 1900's. His widow, my Aunt Minerva and her two children, Gladys and George Kenneth lived here until they moved to Hancock, Maine. About 1905, the property was sold out of the Rich family to Miss Della Champagne, who with a sister and guests spent summers here until in the 1930's. It was bought by my

brother and sister, Walter and Ava Rich, and used for summer guests. A few years later, they sold to Cecil Barter, a nephew. Cecil sold to Richard Turner who sold to the present owners, Mr. & Mrs. Breeze.

Miss Champagne altered the house by adding the lovely porch overlooking the Cove [sometime between 1905 and 1920].

The large fireplace that used to take cordwood (four foot lengths) was rebuilt and the brick oven which used to open in what is now the hall is bricked up. The writer drove brother Willie's horse when the stone slab now used as a step at the west door was moved from the front, south side, of the house.

William P. Turner, whose family lived in the present McKeen house beside the church walk once told my wife, Vera and me, that he attended school one winter in one of the upstairs rooms in the Old Rich House at the head of the Cove. You may ask why? As I recall, Professor Turner did not offer that much information.



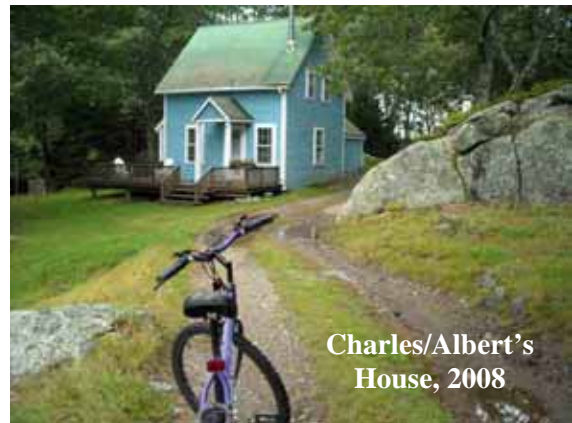
One of two upstairs bedrooms at Breeze cottage



"Lil' Red"

Rich's Cove School District  
(East Side School)

The next house we come to as we leave the Cove is the Bruces. This place was built, by whom I do not know for my Uncle, Captain Charles Rich, probably around 1885. It was occupied by his family until they moved to Rockland about 1905. This date is based on the fact that two of their children attended the East Side School in the winter term of 1904-05. Uncle Charles sold the house to my brother Albert, who lived there with his family until his death in 1945. After Albert's death, daughter Vira and husband Jack Keane and mother Mary lived there until Mary's death. The daughter and family moved to California, and the house was sold to the Bruces who made extensive alterations.



Charles/Albert's House, 2008

I was around when the present well was dug. I also went to Rockland with Albert (my first trip to the mainland) when he bought the pump for the house. It was on this trip that I had my first lesson in engineering. During the discussions at the hardware store, I believe it was H. H. Cree's, it was determined that the difference in elevation of the minimum water level in the well and the kitchen sink was too great for the usual kitchen pump. One was needed with a valve at the cellar floor level which would bring the maximum water lift within 21 feet. I could write more on the digging of this well with its difficulties, but I had better leave that...If you think the area there is all rocks, it is not so. Underneath that surface is a layer of "hardpan" gravel and pebbles cemented together with nature's cement, which would dull the sharpest pick-axe. Under that is found layers and layers of the softest and stickiest blue clay one can imagine.

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William Rich's house, 2008,  
looking north

Next we come to the house now owned by the Rev. Bob Hoskins, North of the road as you leave the Cove. This house was formerly owned by the Rands, I believe, and occupied by them and Mr. and Mrs. Del Bowen. The original owners were the William Riches. This is the only house in the Cove of which I have personal knowledge of the building, as I was there and did a little to help. I was there when Brother Willie made arrangements with my Father to purchase the land on which it is built. I was there when the first load of lumber was brought down from Stonington by Captain Ed. Knownton [Knowlton] in or on his "Pinky". (In case you are not familiar with this term, I will quote from Messrs. Funck and Wagnalls: "a boat having a narrow or pointed stern"). In this case, it was a sail boat.

It now seems to me that I was always around when there was work to be done. Anyway I helped Willie transport the lumber to the house site using his horse and Jigger. The lumber was landed on the rocks below the old house at the head of the Cove. As to the time, the best guess I have is that it was started in 1911, and finished in 1912. I arrived at the date in this manner. I took my nephew, William Lyle [Rich], to his first day at school there. He died in 1968 at the age of sixty one, making his birth date 1907. Adding the usual five years to that would make the year 1912.

Builders: A stone mason from Stonington constructed the cellar walls from fieldstones gathered around the area. I don't remember his name but I do remember his helper, Arthur Young. Ralph Seekins, then from Stonington, was the principal carpenter, and from my memory an excellent one. Some of his helpers were Roy Coombs, a cousin, Roy Eaton, and Milton Allen from Stonington. Mr. Seekins was always right on the job and didn't like to have an audience or a sidewalk superintendant as we call them today. I went to the house one day,

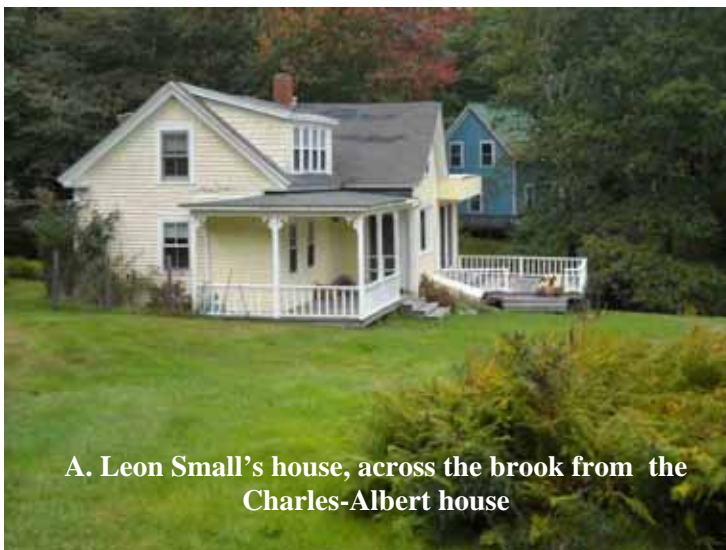
and not a sound was to be heard, coffee breaks had not been invented at that time. I looked down the cellar and then went to the second floor, still no sound. As I approached the attic I heard a voice. Mr. Seekins and Roy Coombs were sitting on the top step of the attic stairs. He was explaining to Roy how to lay out and cut 'jack rafters' using the carpenters square. This was my only lesson in the use of the square, and I applied that many years later when I was remodeling my own home. I have studied mathematics in engineering school and have used it a great deal in my engineering work, but I have said many times that if a good carpenter realized how much mathematics he was using when he applied a square, it would frighten him to death.

Aside from Mr. Seekins, another artist at work on the house was the plasterer. A plasterers helper arrived on the job first to prepare the plaster as it had to 'set' for some time before it could be used. Here again, I did some helping. I believe the sand I helped Willie boat [sic] in was used for the finish coat. The plasterer was a small man whose name I do not recall. Unlike Mr. Seekins, he liked an audience when he worked and he usually had one. I certainly admired that man for his skill in handling plaster.

I don't think this should be revealed to Rev. Bob, but the original cost of this house, which has four rooms on each of two floors, a full attic, a full concrete floor and concrete cistern; was \$1200. This was my impression, and I confirmed it many years later with my brother.

I would like to record an incident which is not directly related to the house, but to the owners. While living across the yard from our house, my brother and his son Lyle had scarlet fever. My sister- in-law, Emma, would get butter, milk and eggs from my mother. In order to pay cash and not to be in danger of passing the scarlet fever germs across the yard, Emma would bring the right change to Mother in the yard in a pan of boiling soapy water. I believe this was the original cash and carry.

[The William Rich house is now owned and occupied by Marie Hamly.] JB



No record of the houses at the Cove would be complete without reference to the house across the brook from the Bruces [Charles/Albert Rich]. With permission of my friend and former neighbor, A. Leon Small, I will submit information he sent to me.

“Reference to the history of my house at the Cove, all the history that Dr. Noyes could get when he was writing a history of the Island was what my Mother [Inez (Billings) Small] and your Father [Edwin Rich] could give him. No one knows when the house was built or who built it. The first to live in it was a man known as Master

Tyler who taught school on the East Side. When he moved out, my Grandfather Small [Hiram] moved in and lived there until he died.”

I pointed out to Leon that the Lothrop Lewis Plan showed a G. Tyler on this lot. Leon advised that there were several occupants or claimants for this property, but it was State land until his Father bought it in the 1880’s.

[G. Tyler was not listed on the Lothrop Lewis map. Thomas Tyler occupied lot *No. 20* from 1820-1840, a lot previously possessed by Peletiah Barter in 1803. Gene and Wynn Skolnikoff bought the house from Leon Small] JB

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Although not in the cove, but nearby, another house is worthy of attention; that occupied by Maurice and Helen Barter. Again, thanks to Leon Small for the following information

“The house Maurice lives in was taken apart and hauled by oxen by my Grandfather Eaton, and put together again where it now sits. The cellar it came off from is about halfway down the pond [Long Pond] between the road and the ocean. A man named Morse owned it and I think they moved to Stonington.”



Long Pond

[House photo temporarily unavailable]

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I seemed to have digressed considerably from the original intent of: who built, when and what type architecture. It seems that the personal and historical facts included might be of possible interest to future readers.

I am thankful for Mrs. MacDonald for urging me to do this bit for the Library. In doing it, I have learned a great deal myself, and have been made aware of those hearty souls and early settlers who made homes and schools and brought up children on this rugged, rock-bound coast of Maine known as Isle au Haut (Great Isle of Holt).



In case this writing is being favored by being read, I wish the readers to overlook a few or perhaps many typographical errors that I do not find. My stenographic pool dried up about a year ago when I ceased to work for a living and started to live to work.

[Signed] Floyd W. Rich  
March 27, 1970

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**[In a genealogical compilation dated January 1, 1993, *The Rich Family of Isle au Haut, Maine*, Norman W. Rich included the following comments to his father’s essay]:**

I might add a small bit of information about another house at the Cove. The log cabin built on the South shore of the Cove was built for a Dr. Solley. Later it was owned by the Rev. Fred Hoskins. The year built I am not sure of but was probably in the early 1940’s. Dr. Solley had a swimming pool built by my Uncle Walter Rich on a wood frame with a canvas liner. Water was pumped up from the Cove, and the system seemed to work quite well. In the first fall, Walter drained the pool, and removed the canvas. Being quite wet and heavy, he refused to reinstall the canvas the following spring! The pool was never used again.

Walter built the chimney and fireplace for this house of fieldstone which he transported from Stonington, enroute to the Island on vacation, and we were met there by Uncle Walter with his boat loaded to the gunnel with stone. Uncle Walter loaded us and our gear on top of this great pile of stone. All the way to the Island I was sure the next wave would sink us, as the boat only had about three or four inches of freeboard left.

One other house my father left out in his narrative is the Cabin located on the shore to the east of the Edwin Rich house. This small three room building was build [sic] by Walter Rich in 1941 as his “Hide a Way”, and was used by our family and others as our vacation home for many years. The views from this spot to the East are fantastic.

I might relate an incident regarding Albert’s house. This was acquired by Mr. Bruce who was a professor (I believe) at a well known Eastern university. He had my Uncle Llewellyn build a garage for his old Ford car. He insisted that Lew put the byfold [sic] doors on to swing inwards. Uncle said the doors should swing out but Mr. Bruce prevailed. Well, when the car arrived on the Island, it would fit in the garage, but the



doors wouldn't close. It took Mr. Bruce most of the summer to screw up the courage to ask Lew to re-hang the doors. Also it seemed that the ledge that protruded into the garage caused some trouble in parking the car. One day Mr. Bruce showed up on the mail boat with a large box of Dynamite. It took some mighty fast talking to convince him to use a pick and not the dynamite to remove the offending part of that ledge!

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[Two relatively newer houses have been built in the Cove. The Skolnikoff's built another house, which is situated west of the A. Leon Small house, both of which share the same access road.



Skolnikoff's house, 2008



Peter Scott's house, 2008

Peter Scott built a small cabin across the road from the Charles/Albert house. Perhaps he found inspiration to write his novel, *Barter Island*, in this secluded location.



Turner Family Papers (MS511)  
Courtesy of Special Collections, Raymond H.  
Folger Library, University of Maine

Rich's Cove, ca. 1910-1920

Fish shacks enlarged (note the one partially obscured by the trees still stands [below] as of 2008)



Fish shacks (old wharves are gone as of 2008), looking easterly

***Final Note:*** *A Pictorial History of Houses in Rich's Cove, Isle au Haut, Maine* is a “work in progress”. The weather prevented me from finding the “cellar hole” in Old Cove. Since it was mentioned in Floyd W. Rich's essay, the dimensions and a photograph would be appropriate inclusions to this history.

Norman W. Rich mentioned a cabin East of Edwin Rich's house. It has been disassembled by Marie (Rich) Lane. I don't recall seeing the cabin he mentioned on the South shore of the cove.

To complete the pictorial narrative, I would like to add a shot of Maurice Barter's house situated across the main road from the entrance to Rich's Cove.

If you have additional facts, photographs, and/or corrections to the information presented, or know of stories and/or information handed down orally or available in publications that you would like to share, please feel free to contact me.]

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