

First Person, First Period *By Regina Cole*

WHEN BARBARA LAMBERT SHOWS OFF HER OLD house, including a room she added five years ago, the response is never subtle. "Wow!" guests will exclaim. "This is incredible!"

It is impressive. Massive rafters arch far overhead. The far wall is mostly a triple leaded-glass window, and from another wall French doors open to a garden. Light streams in, illuminating the mellow surfaces of old furniture.

"This is very special," Barbara smiles as she walks to a grain-painted box prominently displayed atop a massive Welsh dresser. "It was under a bunch of stuff in the woodshed, full of metal parts. I could barely lift it." The "it" is a document box, the repository for important papers in a substantial 17th-century man's life. Shortly after Barbara Lambert bought this house, a historian friend was sorting through the municipal archives and unearthed the bill of sale of just such a box to Thomas Riggs. "As the town clerk for 51 years, I imagine Riggs kept the town records in it," Barbara says.

From the new room, a narrow hall leads to a wall covered with silvery gray shingles; a door opens into a very old room. "Now we are in the Cape-style section Thomas Riggs added in 1700 or so," Barbara says, passing through several plain-paneled rooms, wide floorboards gently sloping underfoot. "He bought the house from the three adventurers who built it. As close as we can determine, that was about 1645." A house built by the earliest settlers in New England; that makes it a first-period house.

The group of visitors arrives in the original part of the house, a room used as a library. Bookshelves line the walls, a photocopy machine does double duty as an end



When she bought the Riggs House, Barbara Lambert surprised everyone—seen herself. Five years later, she loves to welcome guests to the oldest house in town. She calls herself this house's "caretaker."



In colonial times, the Riggs family knew the main room, with its massive open hearth, as the hall. Here it has evolved into what we call the living room. The kitchen was once a lean-to mud room.