

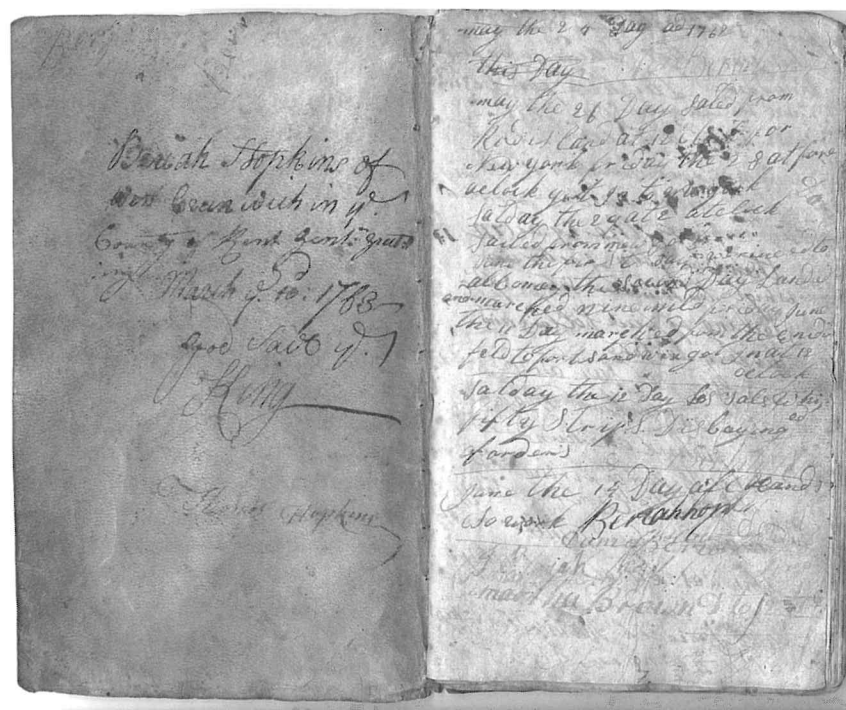
“ENSIGN BERIAH HOPKINS HIS BOOK”

Rachel Peirce

At the November 2013 meeting of the Rhode Island Genealogical Society, Cherry Fletcher Bamberg was available to read old letters and documents for RIGS members. I jumped at the opportunity and brought an old handwritten book for Cherry to decipher. Cherry took the book, noting that the cover was vellum, and began to read the faded handwriting: “May the 26 Day 1762 sailed from Rhode Island at 12 clock for New York.” Her eyes traveling down the page, Cherry immediately said, “This is from the French and Indian War! They sailed from Newport to Albany.”

What a delight. The book had been in my family all my life, but no one had been able to make sense of its jumbled entries that dated from 1762 into the early 1800s. The book measures 4½ by 8 inches and contains about seventy pages. It was given to my father in the 1950s by Lilla (Chase) Dawley of North Kingstown. Lilla’s husband, Chester Dawley, had found the book in a dump. Although this book was not a part of my own family’s history, it has always intrigued me. It belonged to Beriah Hopkins of West Greenwich, apparently given to him just before his militia unit left Newport in 1762 for Fort Stanwix in central New York, then a frontier area. Beriah Hopkins was an ensign in charge of a dozen men in Thomas Tew’s company of Nathaniel Peck’s unit. He had probably learned to read and write at brief intervals in local schools. Although he was capable of making a fair copy, his usual handwriting was loose and sloppy. The spelling is phonetic at best, and punctuation almost non-existent. This entry on page two, “Fort Stanweekx June the 17 ad 1762 - Then was whipt David Jason four hundered laishese for disirtion” demonstrates the difficulties facing anyone trying to read the book, even once the letters are identified. Misspellings like “lofe” for “loaf” or “mager” for “major” are easily understood, but names of people and places offer a serious challenge. Poor as his writing skills were, they were good enough that Beriah Hopkins was apparently charged with keeping records for his unit, at least punishments, deaths, and accounts with the sutler who supplied the troops with basics, particularly cheering alcoholic beverages.

An inscription on the inside back cover reveals Beriah’s pride in this little journal: “Ensign Beriah Hopkins His Book, God Give Him Grace Theirin to Look Ever and Ever Amen.” The wording was not original—variants can be found in many books, especially Bibles, of the period—but the sentiment seems genuine. Beriah kept the book the rest of his life, filling in empty spaces with family information that many people might have kept in a family Bible, as well as farming accounts.



Beriah Hopkins’s book, open to the first page. Readers may be able to see words about farm business added later at the bottom of the right page. Such additions make transcription even more difficult than it already is. Photo by the author, November 2013.

Fortunately, one page of the little book has the original notes on the left page and a fair copy on the right. With this Rosetta Stone as an aid, I have copied the entries relating to the French and Indian War that are widely scattered, silently correcting the spelling and mechanics for the benefit of readers. Personal names retain with the spelling Hopkins used. Even after careful study some words cannot be read, and these are marked _____. The book itself has no page numbers: the bracketed numbers have been added. Although at first putting the entries in chronological order seemed a reasonable idea, the grouping of different types of records made that impractical. First, let's look at the French and Indian War entries, the most important part to Beriah, and then at the family information.

⌘ Military Records ⌘

When we think of military units in a colonial war, vivid images of danger—battles, ambushes, and disease, particularly smallpox—come to mind. If Beriah Hopkins and his men experienced such dangers, one would not know it from his journal. The fact is that the drama of the French and Indian War had largely played out before Beriah left Newport. In February 1762, under pressure from the Earl of Egremont and General Jeffery Amherst, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed an act for “raising and paying six hundred and sixty-six men, able bodied, effective men, to be employed in His Majesty’s service in North America.” All of the officers were listed in the records of that session, including Ensign Beriah Hopkins.^[1] The muster roll of Beriah Hopkins’s” shows that he enlisted first of his company on 27 February 1762 and was billeted to 20 May 1762, some 82 days.^[2] At his enlistment Beriah had to swear the Oath of Fidelity that he copied into his book on page 76, shown here in his inimitable spelling:

I swear to be true to our Sovering Lord King Gorge and to Searve Him honestly and faithfully in defence of his peson Crown and Dignity against all His Enmeyes or Opposers Whatsoever and to observe and obey his misty orders and the oders of the general and officers set over me by His Maiesty.

This oath was unchanged fifty years later when the British recruited soldiers to fight against the Americans during the War of 1812.

The new soldiers were to replace the Rhode Islanders already at Fort Stanwix in central New York, protecting the “Oneida Carry” that linked major

1. John R. Bartlett, *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England* [hereinafter Bartlett, *Recs. of RI*] (10 vols., Providence R.I.: Alfred Anthony, 1857–1865), 6:295–298, 300.
2. “Muster Role of Insign Beriah Hopkins’ Company together with an Account of Billeting Paid them from the Time thy inlisted to the Time they were Imbarked.” Military Papers, French and Indian War, Rhode Island State Archives, 4:129.

waterways.^[3] The hope was to re-enlist many of the Rhode Island soldiers already at Fort Stanwix. In March the Committee of War was ordered to inspect all the men newly enlisted and discharge the ones unable to pass muster. The process of enlisting and supplying the men dragged on. Rhode Islanders were not perhaps the most enthusiastic British subjects about the war in its various forms. In March and April 1762 General Amherst wrote several letters to Governor Stephen Hopkins and his successor Samuel Ward, expressing outrage over the fact that Rhode Island ports, especially Newport, were supplying the enemy. An embargo was demanded.^[4] Meanwhile George Cornell, “Lieut. Rhode Islanders” at Fort Stanwix, pleaded with Amherst for replacements.^[5] Amherst wrote to Governor Ward 16 May 1762 that prospects for re-enlisting those soldiers already there were dismal: some had already deserted, others so mutinous that they had to be kept in the fort.^[6]

After what must have been an arduous trip, Beriah and his men settled in Fort Stanwix and were there at least into October 1762. Morale and military discipline were poor, to judge by the severe punishments meted out, hundreds of lashes at a time for insubordination, desertion, and petty crime. Remarkably, Hopkins noted only three deaths. His accounts reveal that the soldiers could buy rum and wine, coffee, chocolate, tobacco, and such necessities as soap and candles at fixed prices to prevent price gouging. However much rum they were consuming, the soldiers were not enjoying a comfortable life. George Cornell, by then captain at Fort Stanwix, wrote the General Assembly 24 June 1763 that he had given the men \$10 in clothes as bounty. “They are all naked,” he explained. “They are so ragged that they are scarce fit to be called soldiers.”^[7] It looks as though Beriah Hopkins was safely home at that point. He may have come on one of the two ships that arrived in Newport in November 1762. The *Newport Mercury* of 22 November 1762 reported the arrival a week before of two transports bringing “Part of the Regiment in the Pay of this Colony, which served this Year at Fort Stanwix.” The remainder “except those reserved for the Winter Service,” were coming by land, and some

3. Begun in 1758, the fort was finished only 1762. A plan of the fort can be seen in Seymour I. Schwartz’s book *The French and Indian War 1754-1763, The Imperial Struggle for North America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 100. The legend of the map shows “casmats” for four hundred men, huts for officers, and a magazine for two thousand barrels of powder, among other features. Abandoned after the French and Indian War, Fort Stanwix was rebuilt and played an important role in the Revolutionary War. It is open to visitors today as Fort Stanwix National Monument in Rome, N.Y.
4. Bartlett, *Recs. of RI* [note 1], 6:311–313.
5. Ibid, 6:312–313.
6. Ibid., 9:319.
7. Ibid., 9:365.

had already arrived, “remarkably healthy.”^[8] There is no internal evidence to suggest how Beriah traveled, but a note inside the front cover of his journal shows that he was home by March 1763. He wrote with a flourish: “Beriah Hopkins West Greenwich in ye County of Kent Gent” greetings March ye 10 d. 1763.” Here are the notes relating to this military expedition extracted from many pages in his journal.

[1] May the 26 Day AD 1762 sailed from Rhode Island at 12 clock for New York. Friday the 28 at four o’clock got in to New York. Saturday the 29 at 2 o’clock sailed from New York. June the first day we arrived to Albany. The second day landed and marched nine miles per day June the 11 Day marched from the Enid__feld to Fort Stanwix got in at 12 o’clock.

Saturday the 12 Day Les Sals whipped fifty stripes disobeying of orders.^[9]

June the 14 all Hands to work.

[2] Fort Stanwix - June the 17 AD 1762 – Then was whipped David Jason four hundred lashes for desertion.^[10]

June the twenty day then was William Allen whipped four hundred lashes with cat of nine tails for running away.^[11]

June the 29 AD 1762 then was John Jacton whipped two hundred stripes for stealing of five dollars and three quarters.^[12]

June the 30 day AD 1762 then was William Dodge whipped one hundred stripes for offering to strike Captain Thomas Tew.

8. *Newport Mercury*, 22 Nov. 1762, [p.3]. The comment about the health of the troops was probably meant to reassure Rhode Islanders than they did not carry smallpox.
9. William Loscells or Lascells had enlisted at Newport for this campaign (Muster Rolls of Soldiers Inlisted at Newport by Lieut. Col^l Christopher Hargil, Capt. Thomas Tew, and William Fryer 1762 [hereinafter Muster Roll of Soldiers Inlisted at Newport, 1762], Colonial Militia Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society Library, Mss 673, sg 1).
10. Probably David Johnson who enlisted at Newport (Muster Roll of Soldiers Inlisted at Newport, 1762 [note 9]).
11. William Allen was also enlisted at Newport (ibid.).
12. John Jackson was a veteran soldier. He had served in the campaigns of 1758 and 1760, in Captain Kimball’s Co. in 1761, and in the campaign of 1762 (Howard M. Chapin, *Rhode Island in the Colonial Wars* [hereinafter Chapin, *RI in the Colonial Wars*] [1918, 1920] (repr., Baltimore, Md.: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1994), 87). Useful as it is, Chapin’s book lacks documentation, merely noting that the material was taken from unspecified original documents at the Rhode Island State Archives.

September 2th Day 1762 then was Ket Alworth whipped three hundred stripes and Benidick Hampton was whipped three hundred stripes.^[13]

[3] September 9th day AD 1762 then was John Wicom whipt three hundred stripes with a cat of nine tails for stealing one coat. [Note: a second entry just below places this punishment of the 19th].

[5] August the 28 AD 1762 then died Sergeant “Mailiam” belong in Capt. Tew’s Company.^[14]

August 31 day AD 1762 then died John Solmon belong to Capt. Tew’s Company.

September 13th day AD 1762 then died “Jemariah Marthas” belong in Major Peck Company.

[9] _____ Fort Stanwix August AD 1762 The “settler” is ordered to sell his goods at the following price lawfull of the Colony of Rhode Island

Good Wine per quart	_____
Rum per gill	£1
	1s.
Loaf Sugar per pounds	21
Brown Sugar per pounds	1s.
	4d.
“Cholaklat” pr pounds	4s.
Coffee pr pounds	2s.
“Candales” pr pounds	2s.
Soap pr pounds	2s.
“Tebacker” per pounds	1s.
	8d.
Mutton per quarter	7s.

A “Cort Mashal” to set immediately

13. Christopher Aylesworth served in Col. Rose’s Regiment in 1762 (Chapin, *RI in the Colonial Wars* [note 12], 30). When Beriah copied the entry on the following page, he wrote the name as “Christ’ Arlsworth.” Benedict Hambleton or Hamilton of East Greenwich. Marched in Capt. Sheffield’s Co. (ibid., 76). Hopkins elsewhere spelled the name as “Hamplaton.”
14. John Maylem had enlisted in Newport (Muster Roll of Soldiers Inlisted at Newport, 1762 [note 9], [1]).

[12] June the 29 AD 1762 Beriah Hopkins then taken up of the "satler" one loaf of sugar of seven pounds weight

[19] May the fourth day AD 1762 Spink Tarbox debtor to two shillings lawful money^[15]

[21] May AD 1762 Beriah Hopkins

Samuel Hopkins debtor to cash twenty shilling lawful money

December to cash thirty nine pounds old tenor

[25] Fort Stanwix June the 25 AD 1762

Beriah Hopkins debtor to half a pound of "candel" to the "satieller"

July the 26th Day AD 1762 Beriah Hopkins debtor to the settler to five pounds of sugar to three pounds of coffee and to two pounds of butter

August the 1th 1762 debtor to three gils one pint and a half of rum

August AD 1762 debtor to four pounds of sugar

[27] June the 30 AD 1762 Beriah Hopkins debtor half a pint of wine

July the 8th day debtor to half a pint of Rum

July the 11th AD 1762 debtor to half pint of rum 10--0

July the 17 AD 1762 debtor to three gils of rum

To the Settler July 25th Days debtor to half a pint of Rum

July the 26 AD 1762 debtor to half a pint of rum

August 21th to one pint of Rum

[49] June the 17 AD 1762

Then taken up of the "Satler"

June the 13 One pint of wine five shilling

June the 18 AD 1762 Then taken up of the "Satler" two quarts of New England Rum which six shillings Lawfull money one "candel," one pint of wine six shilling L

June the 28 AD 1762

15. This debt was likely incurred in Newport. Spink Tarbox had enlisted 1 Mar. 1762 and had been billeted in Newport for eighty days before sailing (Muster Roll of Soldiers Inlisted at Newport, 1762 [note 9]). He was a veteran, having served in Col. Harris's Regiment in 1760 (Chapin, *RI in the Colonial Wars* [note 12], 137).

Beriah Hopkins debtor to one pint of wine four shillings lawfull money

Beriah Hopkins debtor to one pint of wine four shillings lawfull money

[51] August 22th AD 1762 D

to one quart rum 3s.

D to six pound of "ches" [*cheese*] 12s. 6d.

August 26th Day then taken up of the settler four pound of suger 05

September 7th day AD 1762 Then taken up of the "Selter" three pounds of coffee 6s. to one gill of rum __ 5

September 16th Day AD 1762 then taken up of the "S" one pint of rum and half pint of rum

September 27 AD 1762 Then taken up of the "selter" five pounds of sugar 06 __

October 16th Day 1762 pounds of _____ to one pint of rum

[57] "Fort Stanwix October 28th AD 1762 To M^r Thomas Case leving in Est Greenwich The comite of War Sr pray be plesed to pay Sarah Straight my waigers that is due to me for v____ received And in so doing you will oblige a solder to sarve And this order shall be your discharge

Samuel Hill

Samuel X Straigh

His Mark"^[16]

[62] June the 29 AD 1762 Bengimon Rogers debtor to one pair of shoes twelve shillings, to one pair of stockings six shillings lawful money, one Dram six pence.^[17]

July the 4th Day AD 1762 Beriah Hopkins debtor to Samuel Hill four and six pence.

Camp Fort Stanwix August 25th AD 1762 Samuel Hill debtor to two shillings York money^[18]

October 24th Day to Six pence Lawful money

16. Samuel Straight had enlisted 28 Feb. 1762, the day after Beriah, and he had been billeted in Newport for 81 days (Muster Roll of Soldiers Inlisted at Newport, 1762 [note 9]).

17. Benjamin Rogers enlisted 1 Mar. 1762 and was billeted at Newport for 80 days (Muster Roll of Soldiers Inlisted at Newport, 1762 [note 9]). He had served in Col. Harris's Regiment in 1760 (Chapin, *RI in the Colonial Wars* [note 12], 119).

18. Hill served in 1758 and again in 1762 ((Chapin, *RI in the Colonial Wars* [note 12], 82).

[63] October 24th Day AD 1762 Henary Hopkins to three Shillings Lawful money^[19]

Gidion Braton to two shillings lawfull money^[20]

[69] John Spencer
Henary Hopkins
Thomas Cahoon
Peteaur Wever
Edward Caprin
Phillip Sweet
Isaac Wickes
Ebenezer Hunt
Josiah Spink
John Wever
Jonathan Rouse
Peleg Doyle
Adom Cooper
John Gorge
Nathan Wakker
Joshua Spencer
John Skillons
Job Albanon
Benonay Robins
Lawtton Hopkins

[72] Joshua Andrew* [* indicates
the soldier belonged to Hopkins's
company]
Stephen Codner
Samuel Straight*
Benjamin Spencer
William Thorn
William Hynes*
Edward Grene
Thomas Wells
William Sweet
Gidon Braton*
Benjamon Rogers*
Robart Nichols
Phillip Andrew*
Spink Tarbox*
Virah Mattson
James Auston
Jonathon Hill*
Calleb Hill*
William Manchester*

Family Records

Beriah Hopkins may have been a farmer in West Greenwich, but he had an ancestry that rings bells among Rhode Island genealogists.^[21] Born in 1737, he

19. Henry Hopkins had extensive service in this conflict. He was at Fort George, R.I. in 1756 and 1757, in the campaign of 1760, and in Lt. Hargill's Co. in 1762 (Chapin, *RI in the Colonial Wars* [note 12], 83).
20. Gideon Brayton enlisted 5 Mar. 1762 and was billeted 76 days before sailing (Muster Roll of Soldiers Inlisted at Newport, 1762 [note 9]).
21. For a detailed version of his genealogy, see Esther L. Woodworth-Barnes, *Huling Genealogy: Descendants of James and Margaret Huling of Newport Rhode Island and Lewes, Delaware* (n.p., The Author; 1984), 103.

was the son of Samuel Hopkins and Honor⁴ Brown (*Alexander³, Beriah², Charles¹*) of West Greenwich. Samuel Hopkins owned a lot of land in West Greenwich and served on the town council and as a justice of the peace for many years. Beriah was one of seven children living in 1790 when his aged father made his will. Samuel Hopkins named sons Alexander, Samuel, Joseph, Beriah, and Ebenezer Hopkins and daughters Honor Tillinghast, Sarah Albro, and Lydia Matteson.^[22] Beriah's father is buried in Coventry Historic Cemetery 66, Woodland Cemetery, sometimes called Knotty Oak. His gravestone, like his will, mentions that he was the son of Joseph Hopkins.^[23]

Like his father, Beriah lived to a great age. Beriah wrote his will 11 February 1815. He bequeathed to his "loving wife Mary Hopkins all the estate that she brought to me both in money and in goods and chattels to be at her disposal after my decease, and also I give to her my said wife one third of my provisions of every kind provided for my family at my decease." He also mentioned his daughter Lucy Arnold, granddaughter Mary Brown, grandsons Beriah Hopkins Arnold and Rowland Arnold. He appointed his "friend and son in law Peleg Arnold" as his



*Beriah Hopkins Burial Ground, West Greenwich Historic Cemetery
45 on Henry Brown Road. Photo courtesy of Robert Butler,
November 2013.*

22. West Greenwich Wills, West Greenwich Town Hall, 2:334–338.
23. Dr. Bill Eddleman & John E. Sterling, *Coventry Historical Cemeteries* (Baltimore, Md.: Gateway Press, 1998), n. pag., arranged by cemetery number. As this cemetery did not open until 1874, Samuel and the relatives buried around him must have been moved from an earlier burial ground.

executor. On 4 April 1820 he wrote a codicil to his original will leaving his wife Mary “one half” rather than “one third part of my provisions.” He also noted that his grandson Beriah H. Arnold was deceased, and mentions his great grandson Beriah H. Browning and another grandson Stephen Arnold.^[24] An inventory of the goods and chattels belonging to Beriah Hopkins covered four pages and amounted to \$1,611.92.^[25] Beriah Hopkins is buried in West Greenwich Historic Cemetery 45 on Henry Brown Road in West Greenwich.^[26] Actually, reburied. At its meeting 25 September 1820 the West Greenwich Town Council gave Peleg Arnold, Beriah’s son-in-law, permission to move him to a spot beside his first wife, “he having been buried by the side of another person by mistake.”^[27] Beriah’s second wife, Mary (Harrington) (Green) Hopkins, died shortly after that meeting, and she too is buried with Beriah. Mary made her will on 29 September 1820 the day before her death, and it was proved 4 October 1820. In her will she mentions brothers Benjamin and Carr Harrington, her sister Sarah Briggs, and nieces Mary Harrington and Mary Briggs. She also mentions Cynthia and Phebe Ann Harrington (possibly her sisters).^[28]

Although Beriah did not record information about his siblings, there is plenty of family data scattered through his tiny journal. Beriah carefully noted details of his parents’ lives, his own two marriages, and the births of his children. Beriah noted his parents’ deaths 32 years apart in his book:

[22] March the twenty fifth day AD 1768 then deceased Honour Hopkins the wife of Samuel Hopkins. She being in her fifty ninth year of her age. It was about ten of clock in the “four noon” when she deceased.

April the “fourteenth” day AD 1790 then deceased Samuel Hopkins Esq^r He being in his eighty seven year of his age, born January the nineteenth day AD 1704.

He also made note of his first marriage:

[32] “I hearby certify that Beriah Hopkins of West Greenwich in the county of Kent and son of Samuel Hopkins Esq^r and Mary Reynolds of West Greenwich aforesaid and daughter of James Reynolds Esq^r ware lawfully

24. West Greenwich Wills, 5:76–78.

25. An addition to the inventory of the personal estate for \$36.85 was added on 11 July 1821 (West Greenwich Wills, 5:80–84; 5:141).

26. Rhode Island Historic Cemetery Database, reading of Bob and Charlene Butler, 2010. The lot is named for him.

27. West Greenwich Town Council Record, 6:106.

28. West Greenwich Wills, 5:85–86.

joined together in marriage the 11th day of December Anno que Domini 1768. Before me the subscriber Job Spencer Just of ye peace.

Four months and eighteen days later he noted the birth of his first child:

[32] April the “twenth” ninth day AD 1769 then born Lucy Hopkins of the wife of Beriah Hopkins.

Sadly, the next entry mentions the birth and the death less than two weeks later of his son “Roulan”:

[33] November the 23th Day AD 1778 then born “Roulan” Hopkins of the wife of Beriah Hopkins and deceased the forth day of December 1778.

He also noted the death of his first wife Mary (Reynolds) Hopkins.

[33] June the 15th day AD 1796 then deceased Mary Hopkins the wife of Beriah Hopkins. She being in her forty eight year of her age.”

The next page notes Beriah’s second marriage, two years after the death of his first wife.

[35] “September 2th AD 1798 “mariaged” Beriah Hopkins and Mary Green. She being “tew” and forty years old.”

Another hand, perhaps that of his daughter Lucy, added Beriah’s own death in 1820, almost sixty years after the little book had been issued to Ensign Beriah Brown.

[36] June the 26 day 1820 then “decesed” Beriah Hopkins being in 85 year of his age.”



Beriah Hopkins’s simple prayer—“Ensign Beriah Hopkins His Book: God Give Hime Grace Heirin to look for ever and ever Amen”—could not, of course, be granted literally. Yet over 250 years later, modern readers can look at the journal, cherished, discarded, rescued, and finally deciphered.

Rachel Peirce, editor of The RIGS Reporter, lives in North Kingstown, Rhode Island and can be reached at peircerachel@yahoo.com.