



## Ephraim Kirby Award

This award is named for the first Most Excellent General Grand High Priest of the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, who served from 1798-1804. A brief history of this remarkable man and Mason follows.

He was born in Ancient Woodbury, Connecticut, in 1757. He took part in the struggle for American Independence, saw action at Bunker Hill, and received numerous saber wounds at the Battle of Elk River from which he nearly died. In all he is said to have been in nineteen battles and skirmishes, receiving thirteen wounds, including the saber cuts already mentioned. He was an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati of Connecticut. By his own diligence and labor he earned his education as a lawyer. In recognition of his legal talents and growing reputation, in 1787 the honorary degree of Master of Arts was conferred on him by Yale.

Published in 1789, *Kirby's Reports of Cases Adjudged in the Superior Court of the State of Connecticut, from the year 1785, to May, 1788, with some Determinations in the Supreme Court of Errors* is a record of the legal history of Connecticut's courts. He became a member of St. Paul's Lodge No. 11, Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1781. Representing that lodge at the convention of July 8, 1789 to form the Samuel Kirkland Grand Lodge of Connecticut, he was elected its secretary. He was Grand Senior Warden of that Grand Lodge from 1795-97. He served three terms as master of his own lodge. Little is known of his chapter record except that he was a member of the Mark Lodge located at New Town, Connecticut. When the Grand Chapter of Connecticut was organized at Hartford, May 17, 1798, Kirby was elected its first Grand High Priest. He was also elected first General Grand High Priest in 1798, serving until his death in 1804. He was thus Grand High Priest and General Grand High Priest at the same time.

Congress, by an act of March 27, 1804, created an additional judge for the Mississippi Territory due to the increasing influx of settlers into that region. Under

this act President Thomas Jefferson, on April 6, 1804, appointed Ephraim Kirby as the additional judge. Having accepted the office, he went directly to his new post, Fort Stoddert, on the Alabama River north of Spanish-held Mobile, Alabama, near the present-day town of Mount Vernon. He left his wife and eight children behind in faraway Connecticut. In this sparsely settled wilderness, he began the foundation of a new court system for what would become the State of Alabama. At best, Judge Kirby could not have held more than one term of Court, for he died of yellow fever on October 4, 1804, at Fort Stoddert. His burial spot is unknown. Sadly, he died before learning that President Jefferson had appointed him Governor of the Mississippi Territory.

This prestigious award serves as an opportunity to recognize special Companions who have attained past presiding rank in their Grand York Rite bodies (Lodge, Chapter, Council, Commandery) and who have then gone on to continue their work and commitment to service even beyond the term of their office, or beyond the normal boundaries of dedication. A Custodian, appointed for each constituent Grand Chapter, selects and nominates candidates whom they determine merit this award. The recipients must be Royal Arch Masons in good standing. In the first year (2014), up to three candidates may be recipients; in the second year, two; and subsequently one annually.

The jewel, shown above, is suspended from a red grosgrain ribbon and is worn under the collar and under a bow tie or over a necktie. Pinned on the ribbon above the jewel is a metal device inscribed "Ephraim Kirby Award."

Recommendations and presentation can be made at any time but it is hoped that presentations will be made at suitably auspicious occasions.