

AWARD CRITERIA

Ephraim Kirby Award



A. PURPOSE

This prestigious award serves as an opportunity for the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons International to recognize extraordinary 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 far beyond the term of their office and the normal boundaries of dedication.

B. ELIGIBILITY

A Custodian, appointed for each constituent Grand Chapter, may select and nominate a candidate from their jurisdiction whom they determine demonstrate continuing, outstanding service to the Craft in merit of this award. The Custodian may make recommendations any time during the Capitular Year, but only one deserving Companion may be honored with the Ephraim Kirby Award on an annual basis. While the recipient may be recognized from any York Rite Masonic Body, the candidate must be Royal Arch Mason in good standing to receive the award. It is highly suggested, presentation of the Ephraim Kirby Award should be reserved for a suitably auspicious occasion (i.e. Annual Convocation, York Rite Conference, etc.) as time, availability and circumstances best dictate.

C. DESCRIPTION

Properly worn, the jewel 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." The colors and composition may be briefly described as a Triple Tau surrounded by a delta and wreath, embedded in a

keystone over a Royal Arch surmounted by a radiating sunburst. Red is the color of blood and symbolic of the life-force through resurrection and immortality. It is the symbolic color of the Royal Arch degree; emblematic that fervency and zeal which should ever actuate all Royal Arch Masons.

Whereas the Tau is the emblem of the generative power, of eternal life, of salvation and reincarnation; the union of three Tau's alludes to the grand tri-unison by which the horrific, gloomy, and unshapen chaos was regenerated into structured form, order and harmonious existence. Further signified by the omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence of the divine delta, the Triple Tau is centered in a field of white, emblematic of devotion and righteousness, as well as representative of the heart of the world, initiation, the unconscious, and path to esoteric wisdom. The encircled wreath denotes the glory of triumph to the honoree in recognition of achievement, and signifies the auspices of authority by which service is rendered and commended. Because the meaning of the Keystone and Royal Arch are well known in Capitular Masonry, they will not be described here. Lastly, gold is the symbol of the sun, divinity and majesty, and denotes immortality. Regarded as "all-seeing", it represents humankind's higher self and the true essence of being.

D. HISTORY

This award is named for the first, Most Excellent General Grand High Priest of the General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons, Ephraim Kirby, who served from 1798-1804. A brief history of this remarkable man and Mason reveals 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 University. 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. As America expanded west, Congress, by an act of 27 March 1804, created the position of an additional judge for the Mississippi Territory due to the increasing influx of settlers into that region. Under this act President Thomas Jefferson, appointed Ephraim Kirby as the additional judge effective April 6, 1804. Having accepted the office, he went directly to his new post at 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 the new, sparsely settled wilderness, he began the foundation of a new court system for what would become the State of Alabama. Regrettably, Judge Kirby did not complete his appointed term, having succumbed to yellow fever just six months later on 4 October 4 1804 at Fort Stoddert. His burial spot remains unknown. Sadly, he died before learning that President Jefferson had also appointed him Governor of the Mississippi Territory. MEC Kirby 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 first 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 on 17 May 1798, MEC Kirby was elected the 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.