

## CAPTAIN WILLIAM KIDD OF DUNDEE, SCOTLAND AND NEW YORK CITY

As a long-time Kidd genealogy researcher and volunteer co-administrator of the Kidd Y-DNA project, I am often told that someone's great-aunt Jane or third cousin Bob always swore that their Kidd line directly descended from the pirate Captain William Kidd. This brief account is intended to explain why this is a tall tale, not a true one.

The man who became known as Captain William Kidd—based on his own words in 1695—was born in 1654 in the port city of Dundee in Scotland. His father was believed to be a mariner named John Kidd, who was lost at sea when William was a young boy; after the father's death, the family was believed to have received support from the local mariners aid society the Fraternity of Master and Seamen. Very little is known of William Kidd's early life, but he also found his way to a life at sea.

Dr. David Dobson, in his new reference guide *Scottish Genealogy: The Basics and Beyond*, published in 2021 by the Genealogical Publishing Company (available through their website and other booksellers), cites the known records of William Kidd's origins in the book's introduction. Dr. Dobson, a Scottish researcher of 50 years, also offers wise advice to all genealogists:

“Beware of unreferenced material, particularly on the internet, as some of it is wishful thinking or based on hearsay. Even normally reliable sources can be wrong. For many years sources like the Dictionary of National Biography stated that “William Kidd (the pirate or privateer) was born in Greenock, Scotland, son of a minister.” Years ago, I came across a transcript of a trial in London before the High Court of the Admiralty of England, where Kidd was a witness in 1695. He stated that he was born in Dundee, aged 41, a mariner based in New York. This clearly was at odds with the traditional story, so I decided to check it out. Back in Dundee I checked the baptismal register of the Dundee parish church and found that he had been baptized there in 1654, the son of John Kidd, a seaman, and his wife, Bessie Butchart. I then went to the city archives, and in the local seabox I found a reference to John and a few years later to his wife, who was in receipt of a pension, which implied that John had perished at sea. The traditional story was that William's father was a minister of the Church of Scotland (the only church at the time), so I turned to the *Fastii Scoticae*, which provides biographical data on every minister of the Church of Scotland since the Reformation of 1560, but no Kidd was mentioned in Greenock or anywhere in Scotland. So, the traditional story that Kidd was born in Greenock, the son of a minister of the church, was wrong; he, in fact, came from more humble origins in Dundee. So do not rely on unreferenced sources!”

[Source: <https://genealogical.com/2021/04/12/excerpt-from-scottish-genealogy-the-basicsand-beyond-by-david-dobson>]

Whether William Kidd should be termed a pirate or a privateer has been of considerable debate, but what is known is that he had powerful English backers who ultimately betrayed him in the end, leading to his trial, conviction, and death by hanging in 1701 in London. One excellent and well-researched work, based on original records, is *The Pirate Hunter: The True Story of Captain Kidd*, by Richard Zacks, available through Amazon and other booksellers.

While at the height of his power, William Kidd married a wealthy widow of New York City named Sarah Bradley Oort, and maintained a home on Wall Street in New York City. Sarah was twice married and widowed before marrying Kidd. Her first husband, William Cox, died in 1689; her

second husband, John Oort, is believed to have died shortly before Sarah and William Kidd secured a license to marry in New York on 16 May 1691.

Sarah's assets were confiscated during Kidd's imprisonment, and she also was jailed, likely in an unsuccessful effort to gain his confession. She was eventually freed and her assets returned to her. After Kidd's death in 1701, Sarah married a fourth time, in 1703 to Christopher Rousby. Sarah Rousby signed her will 1 Nov 1732, and wrote a codicil 26 Aug 1743 after the death of her daughter Sarah Latham. Her will was proven 12 Sept 1744. An abstract of her will reads:

In the name of God, Amen. I, SARAH ROUSBY, of New York, widow of Christopher Rousby, late of New Jersey, deceased, being in good health and perfect mind. "The funeralls of my body are to be only such as shall become a Christian." After the payment of all debts and funeral charges, I leave all the rest of my estate to my five children, Christopher Rousby, Henry Rousby, Sarah, widow of Joseph Latham, William Rousby, and Elizabeth wife of John Troup, Jr. My eldest son Christopher shall have my wedding ring. I make my eldest son Christopher, and my son-in-law John Troup, executors. My houses and lands are to be sold by my executors.

To my knowledge, there are no baptismal, marriage, or death records that suggests Sarah's daughters were the daughters of anyone other than her last husband Christopher Rousby, the father of her three sons. There is certainly no evidence that she and William Kidd had any sons together, nor is there any evidence that William Kidd was married or had children prior to his 1691 marriage to the widow Sarah Oort.

Because William Kidd had no documented sons, it is not possible to use Y-DNA testing for this Kidd line. The only path to Y-DNA testing would be through the descendants of a proven brother or male Kidd relative; however, no such men have been identified.

The Kidd Y-DNA project will offer a free Y-DNA test to any Kidd male who can document his descent through the Kidd paternal line from the Dundee family of mariner John Kidd, died ca 1660.

For more information, please contact Sandra Kidd, Kidd Y-DNA project co-administrator, at [skkidd@bellsouth.net](mailto:skkidd@bellsouth.net)

June 2022