



R. Grant

Dorking Camera Club and Derek Gardner Ltd.

### *Nos. 58-61 West Street, Dorking*

During the seventeenth century some of the men living in our town were important in their day, or became so because of their achievements. One of them was William Mullins, a Pilgrim Father, whose family consisted of Alice his wife, their two sons and two daughters. He lived on a good-sized holding fronting West Street, and may have been there for the greater part of his life. That he was a Dissenter may account for the fact that his marriage is not to be found in the Parish Register, nor the baptism of his children. The name of

Mullyn however does appear in the Parish Register in 1571 when in that year John Mullyn married Joane Bridger on 8th July. Most unfortunately, the Register is blank for the years 1572/1578 inclusive, that being the period when John and Joane Mullyns would be bringing up their infant family. However, by genealogical methods we find that the pedigree overleaf is highly probable, and that John and Joane had at least three sons, William, John (who married three times) and Edward.

William, senior, is the man in whom we are chiefly interested. We are informed that he was apparently of rather more social position than most of the Pilgrim Fathers.\* Generally they were small farmers driven to adventurous emigration not only by religious discontent but by social grievances. William Mullins was clearly a man of some property. In 1612 he bought a house with an acre and a half of land and outbuildings, between West Street and Back Lane (now Church Street) for £122, though it was burdened by a mortgage of £200, which he took over.

An item in the books of the Privy Council under the date of 29th April 1616 shows that a Warrant was issued to bring "one William Mollins before their Lordships". On 1st May he appeared before the Privy Council and was continued technically in their custody "untill by their Honours' order he was dismissed". The cause of his arrest is not stated but it can well be assumed that it was on account of the religious controversies of that period, and the sale of his property three years later seems to be a logical sequel.†

The selling of his home may be linked with his intention to join with other Dissenters and go to America to live their life after the manner of their own hearts, and that they attempted to do.

William Mullins took with him his wife Alice, and his two younger children, Joseph and Priscilla, as well as a man-servant named Robert ——. All five of them sailed on board the *Mayflower* when she left Plymouth on 16th September 1620. In the following November the ship arrived, and after some exploration a site was chosen upon which to erect a settlement. Quite naturally they named the site New Plymouth after the last port they had left in their motherland, and because of the kindness they had received from friends there.

A great sickness sped through the settlement, many died, among them the wife and son of William Mullins; he himself perished on 21st February 1621, but managed to make a will copy of which arrived safely in England and Administration of his Estate was granted to his married daughter, Sara Blunden. The registered copy of his will at the Public Record Office reads as follows:

In the name of God Amen; I comit my soule to God that gave it and my bodie to the earth from whence it came Alsoe I give my goods as followeth That forty pounds which is in the hand of goodman Woods I give my wife tenn poundes, my sonne Joseph tenn poundes, my daughter Priscilla tenn poundes, and my eldest sonne tenn poundes Alsoe I give to my eldest sonne all my debts bonds, bills (one only of forty poundes excepted in the hands of goodman Wood) given as

\* H. E. Malden in the Dorking Parish Magazine, 1924.

† *The English Ancestry and Homes of the Pilgrim Fathers.*—C. E. Banks

aforesaid, with all the stock in his owne hands To my eldest daughter I give ten shillings to be paid out of my sonnes stock Furthermore that goodes I have in Virginia as followeth To my wife Alice halfe my goods and to Joseph and Priscilla the other halfe equallie to be devidid betweene them Alsoe I have XXI dozen of shoes, and thirteene paire of bootes which I give into the Companies hands for fforty pounds at seven yeares and if they like them at that rate If it be thought to deare as my Overseers shall think good And if they like them at that rate at the Divident I shall have nine shares wherof I give as followeth twoe to my wife, twoe to my sonne William, twoe to my sonne Joseph, twoe to my daughter Priscilla and one to the Companie Allsoe if my sonne William will come to Virginia I give him my share of land furdernore I give to my two Overseers Mr. John Carver, and Mr. Williamson, twentye shillings a peece to see this my Will performed desiringe them that he would have an eye over my wife and children to be as fathers and friends to them, Allsoe to have a speciall eye to my man Robert which hathe not so approved himselfe as I would he should have done. This is a Copye of Mr. Mullens his Will of all particulars he hath given. In witnes whereof I have sett my hande John Carver, Giles Heale, Christofer Joanes.

This Will proved that William Mullins was not a poor man, for when the size of his house in West Street is taken into consideration with the stock of shoes and boots he took with him on the *Mayflower*, we may conclude that he was a well-to-do cordwainer.

His elder son is mentioned in a Survey of the Manor of Dorking, which from internal evidence is thought to be of the year 1622: in that Survey an entry occurs which states: "William Mullyns holdeth freely a messuage with a backside and a barn in the West Street late John Gettors somtymes Sheffields". In the same Survey there is a second reference to William Mullins in these words: "Thomas Mow holdeth freely a tenement with a garden late Shefeild and late parcel of the messuage now William Mullins aforesaid which said tenement is situate upon the Back Lane". A further Survey in 1649 again refers to William Mullins as a late owner of the property. These three references taken in conjunction with the 1649 map of the Manor—in possession of the Lord of the Manor, the Duke of Norfolk—enable us to pinpoint the building in which Mullins lived, now known as Nos. 58/61 West Street.

A large part of the building as now standing is without doubt the original structure, but it is plain to see that the present day shop fronts are quite modern as well as all the niceties of internal fixtures. But it is a pleasant thought that a man of his character lived and worked and brought up his family in our town, until the great day when four of them set out for America. Of the four, one survived, his daughter Priscilla, whose descendants are to be found in America today. Priscilla has been included in a poem\* now famous, which recounts her curious courtship and the strange steed she rode on her wedding day. The property passed through the hands of many owners, and now belongs to Mrs. Elonora Hutton, the authority on medieval jewellery and silver.

\* *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, by Longfellow.

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