

Henrik Mestitz



This picture of my father, Henrik Mestitz, was taken in Sokoliki in 1915 during World War I. After the war broke out, my father went to Galicia as a captain. He was sent there, to the outskirts of Lemberg [today Ukraine], because the enemy had destroyed fourteen sawmills, and they knew he owned one here, and he had the proper competence. He was commanding a full crew. There were many officers, and each brought along his wife. There were times when the blanket of snow was so thick the soldiers had to dig tunnels in it from house to house. It looks like it was fall in this picture because they are wearing warm clothes. I don't know anybody else in this picture but my father. He's the one standing on the woodpile. They probably burned charcoal there, but I don't really know what they were doing. After I recovered from pneumonia, the doctor recommended a change of air. I don't know whose idea it was to go there - looking at it today, it seems absurd. Probably my dad was longing for us. He sent a sergeant for us, and he took my grandfather Laszlo, my mom, me, my older sister Klara and my brother Mihal to my dad's place in Galicia for a change of air. I think it was total nonsense to make such a venture during the war. We went there by train, and we had to change trains many times. I remember that they tied us together by our hands in order to keep us together. Despite all this Misi still managed to free himself and he wandered so far away that when they managed to find him, it was just one minute before the train's departure. We planned to stay only for a few months, but we remained there until 1916. Dad was stationed 80 kilometers from Lemberg, and he had a lot of people under his command. There were many officers, and they were building, as well as repairing the sawmills. Although I don't remember, I'm quite sure there were other Jewish soldiers there, as well. We came back from Sokoliki in 1916. Miraculously, our house was untouched [even though the war had broken out in the meantime], only the rugs were missing.