

Death in a Pogrom

An excerpt describing the 1919 pogrom from the Felshtin Yizkor Book, written by Joseph Baum, grandfather of Vicki Held Perler of Syosset, and translated by Sora Ludmir.

MY STEPBROTHER and I climbed up into the attic. I hid in the pantry, covering myself with flaxen that was there. My father and stepmother also came into the pantry, but did not manage to close the door behind them.

Five highwaymen broke the windows of the house and came in as my father was closing the door.

"Vichodi [Jews]," one of them shouted.

My father and stepmother had no choice, and they emerged from the pantry.

"Is there anyone else in there?" they asked.

"No! No one!" my father replied, trembling.

The men demanded money. My father gave them what he had. My father and stepmother shuddered with fear.

"Why are you trembling?" one villain asked. "Worse than death it won't be," they chuckled.

"Be done with them," one commander ordered.

One of the murderers proceeded to pierce my father through his cheeks with his sword. He immediately fell to the ground, where they proceeded to stab him in the back.

My father's profession was a painter. Under his long coat he wore a fur. Over the years, the fur accumulated lots of paint, which hardened, preventing the sword from piercing through. My father realized that the sword was not piercing through his clothing, and he played dead.

In the meanwhile, the murderers killed my stepmother, crushing her skull with the butt of their gun. She collapsed, sitting down, facing the wall.