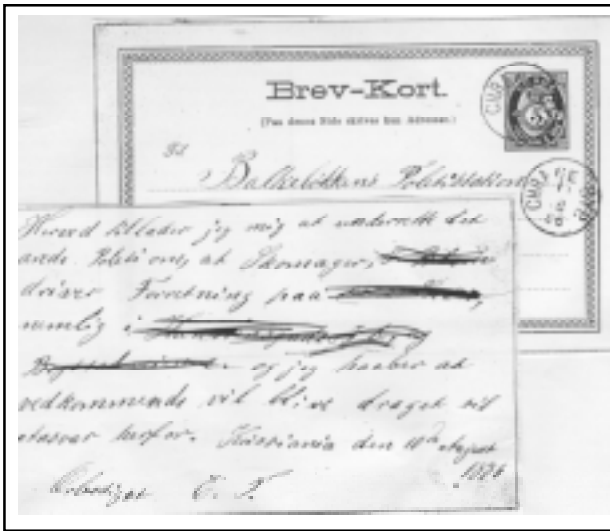


NORWEGIAN INFORMER CARD - 1886

By Frederick A. Brofos

In Venice around the 17th century, there was an infamous letter box on the side of a certain building. It was in the form of a frightening stone face. Into its wide open mouth were dropped denunciations to the authorities, particularly the feared Papal Inquisition. This actually happened in Spain, Austria, and elsewhere for a long time and no doubt caused many arrests and heads to roll. In modern times the dreaded German Gestapo received many reports from informers too. All of these nasty accusations have in common that they were usually anonymous.



While examining some old, peaceful-looking, Norwegian postal cards, I was startled to find among the ordinary business messages, one that was actually an anonymous denunciation to the police! Here is the curious story.

The 5 ore dark green card is postmarked "CHRA.BYP.

11.8.86" by the

Christiania Local Post, and addressed to the small suburban police station at Balkeløkken. Translated, the card reads: "Herewith I allow myself to inform the honorable Police that Shoemaker J. Blom is operating a business in two places, namely at Hansteensgade 5b and at Bogstadveien 2 and I hope that the relevant person will be drawn to accountability therefore. Kristiania, the 10th of August 1886. Respectfully, E. T."

It seems strange now that in those days it was apparently illegal to have two places of business. Perhaps tax evasion was involved here. One wonders also who could write this mean report. Was the mysterious "E.T." a man or a woman? A dissatisfied customer or rival shoemaker? One spelling mistake occurs twice, namely "Poleti" instead of "Politi." It is unusual that any part of the police files (in spite of crossings out) should ever come on the philatelic market. Be that as it may, it is surprising what sometimes comes to light again when the reverse of old cards are properly examined.

