

Cinderella Time: **One Woman Local Post**

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When the postal services were deregulated in Sweden in the early 1990s, a few entrepreneurs established local post companies. In 1997, Post Sweden carried out a major rate hike which immediately led to an upsurge for privately operated postal services. Within months more than 150 companies had been started. They all had the same business plan: to deliver mail locally at rates considerably lower than those charged by Post Sweden.

In the town of Kungsbacka just south of Gothenburg, Sweden's second-largest city, a group of people started planning the establishment of a local post. The group included a man with previous work experiences from Post Sweden. However, at the end of the day only one person remained: Mrs. Marjut Nilsson.

She duly registered the local post with the Swedish Posts and Telecommunications Authority and named her new company Kungsbacka Mail (for some obscure reason several Swedish local posts include the English word mail in their company names).

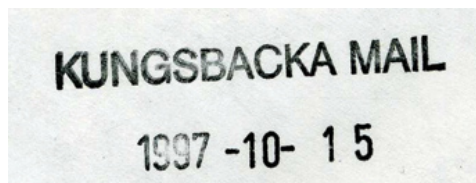
Kungsbacka Mail was inaugurated on October 15, 1997. It was very much a one-woman enterprise with Mrs. Nilsson taking care of absolutely everything.

Unlike many other local posts, Kungsbacka Mail did not have any mail boxes. Instead Mrs. Nilsson spent the afternoons visiting a large number of local businesses to pick up

the mail to be delivered the next morning. She used a bicycle to get around in the town.

Kungsbacka Mail served only the central parts of the town but as it is quite extensive Mrs. Nilsson had very long and exhausting workdays.

The letters and cards were cancelled with a date stamp containing the company name. Marjut Nilsson told me that she had planned to have



stamps printed at some time in the future but these plans never came to fruition as the post had to be closed.

The company budget did not allow Mrs. Nilsson to employ any helpers. She realized that it was of paramount importance to have the total confidence of her customers who were mostly local businesses. She was also hoping to secure the local town council as one of her customers (in many other towns the local council and its various departments are the major clients of the local posts).

Running the local post involved a lot of work and responsibility. Regardless of the reigning weather situation (which in winter can be quite nasty with strong winds and heavy rain) Mrs. Nilsson needed to distribute the mail promptly.

In the spring of 1998 something happened which eventually led to the closure of the local post. One of Marjut's children fell ill and she had to take it to hospital in Gothenburg. As a consequence the distribution of the mail was delayed for a day. She explained what had happened to her many customers but also realized that it was an impossible situation. It was simply not feasible for her one-woman company to guarantee a reliable service and the local post ceased operations in July 1998.

A Gothenburg collector purchased the cancel and a few other items. It is not known how this cancel is being used today.

When I recently interviewed some 30 members of the Kungsbacka Stamp Club it was obvious that very little information was available about the local post. Only one piece of genuine mail seems to exist in collector hands. It is a card

mailed to a local resident with details about an upcoming dentist's appointment.

When I called the secretary of the dentist's surgery she well remembered Marjut Nilsson fetching the mail two or three afternoons each week. However, she didn't remember the rates charged by the local post. In fact, Mrs. Nilsson was also unable to recall how much she charged to deliver a letter.

This just proves how important it is to record all relevant facts about local posts and other similar postal services while they are still in operation.

In the Swedish philatelic marketplace, Kungsbacka Mail covers sometimes pop up. They are generally small sized blank covers with the genuine hand stamp. Many of the covers have had a local address added posthumously using an electric typewriter. With the dearth of genuine material available it seems this is the only way of adding Kungsbacka Mail to a collection of Sweden's modern posts.