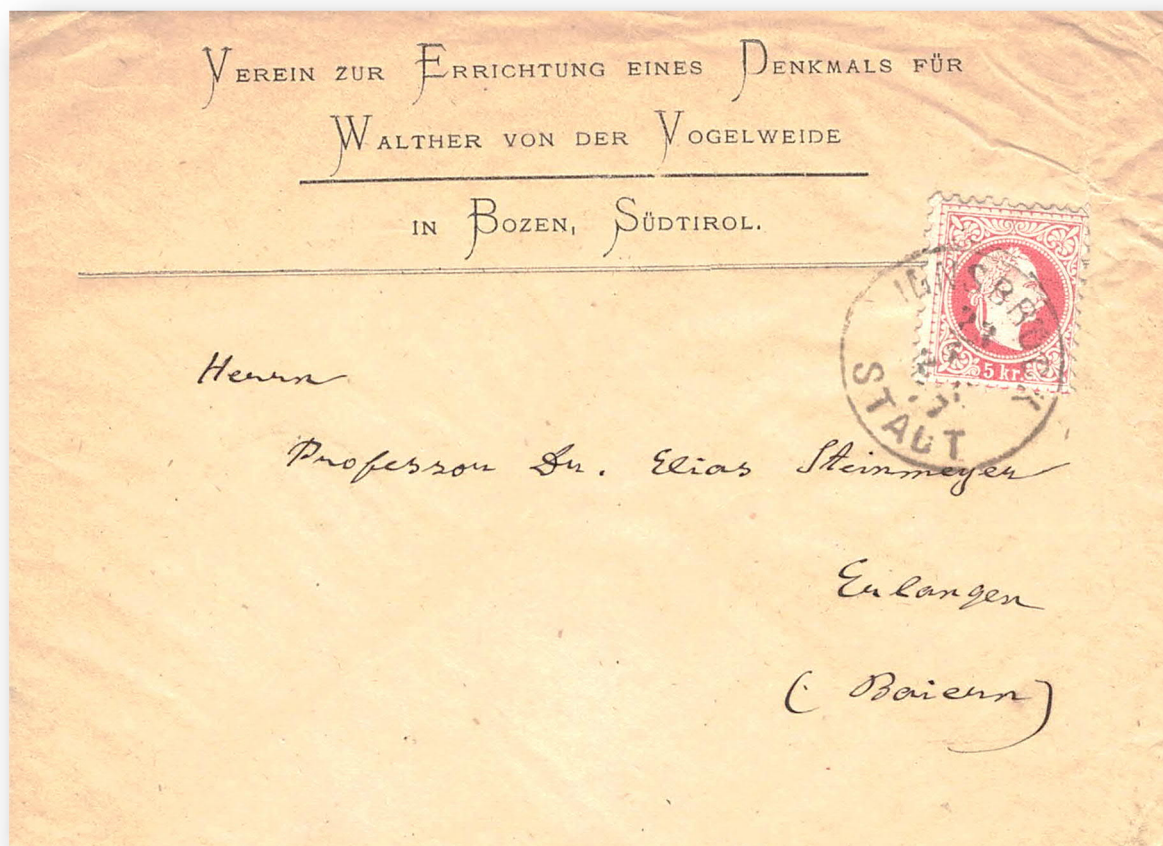


Walther von der Vogelweide in Bolzano on wanderings



Letter from 1877 from Innsbruck city to Erlangen. Sender is the Society for the Erection of a Monument of Walther von der Vogelweide in Bolzano, recipient is Prof. Dr. Elias Steinmeyer. Franked with a 5 Kreuzermark, first printed in 1867 and valid in Austria until 1884.

Everyone knows Walther von der Vogelweide, the minnesinger, and many have been to Bolzano. Not everyone has seen his monument there; it was actually erected against many obstacles. To expedite the erection, an association of German nationals was founded in 1874. 15 years later, in 1889, the monument is inaugurated on Johannisplatz: from 1808 the place is called Maximilianplatz after the Bavarian king, in 1815 it becomes Johannisplatz in honor of Archduke Johann of Austria, because South Tyrol rejoins Austria after the Congress of Vienna, but now - in 1889 - it is henceforth Waltherplatz. For the Italian nationalists this was a provocation - therefore in 1896 a Dante monument was erected in Trento. After the First World War, South Tyrol is annexed by Italy and from 1923 the fascists demand that the monument has to be removed. It should be explained that the entry of Italy on the side of the Allies during the First World War is agreed in a secret treaty [Patto di Londra] already on 26.4.1915. The promises made at that time: Italy would receive large parts of Dalmatia, Trieste, Rijeka, islands in the Aegean Sea, Libya and possibly parts of the Ottoman Empire around Antalya after the victory over the Central Powers. The English once again gave away territories that did not belong to them.

Back to Bolzano: The negotiations in Versailles are disappointing for the Italians - they only get South Tyrol and Trieste. Therefore, fascism with Mussolini in leadership can gain foothold, because the Italian people are severely disappointed. The disputes in Bolzano escalate. Everything culminates in a controversy between Mussolini, Stresemann and Held in the so-called "Walther Question". In 1925, when fascism reaches its first peak, Walther Square is also given an Italian name, Piazza Vittorio Emanuele. In 1935, thanks to pressure from the fascists, the monument is moved to Rosegger Park.



Walther Square in Bolzano in 1894 on a painted picture postcard

Since 1981, Walther von der Vogelweide has been back in its original place - it took a citizens' initiative five years. - We see that despite the friendship (?) between Hitler and Mussolini, Germanism was always hated by the fascists; they had common enemies - but that was it. The Duce was always most afraid that Hitler wanted to reintegrate South Tyrol into the Greater German Reich.



Walther von der Vogelweide auf Briefmarken (BRD 1970; Österreich 1958)

The political tensions of the time were transferred to the behavior of the parties involved. Even Walther von der Vogelweide was controversial; coming from low nobility, his criticisms of the pope are not welcome, also he is said to have begged for a fief from Frederick II like a beggar. He polemicized against the collection of funds and their misuse; he disliked the demand that the emperor should be subordinate to the pope.

On the occasion of his stays at the courts of the influential emperors and kings of Europe, he composed hundreds of songs, sings and sayings and political poetry. His life's work has been handed down to us in the Codex Manesse and other song manuscripts.

The recipient of the letter, Prof. Dr. Elias von Steinmeyer (1848-1922), worked in Strasbourg from 1873 to 1877 as an Ancient-Germanist at the university there and then received a call to Erlangen, where he became emeritus in 1913.

Further reading: Wikipedia