

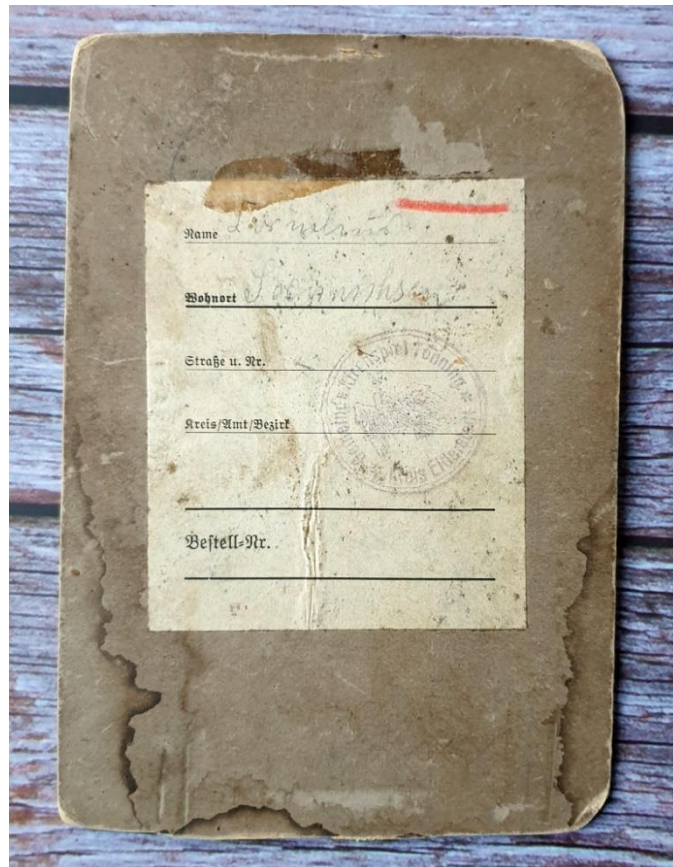
Cornelius Sönnichsen from Tönning

Updated 16.01.2021

A batch of old photos and postcards was sent to me by an ebay seller from Flensburg area in the North of Germany.



Among the photos were two of a WWI-era German sailor. I could identify the handsome sailor to be one **Cornelius Sönnichsen** from Tönning, Nordfriesland in the North of Germany.



Cornelius was part of the crew of SMS Undine, at least that's what his uniform indicates.



According to Wikipedia (Click [HERE](#) to read), SMS Undine was the last member of the ten-ship Gazelle class of light cruisers that were built for the German Imperial Navy in the late 1890s and early 1900s.

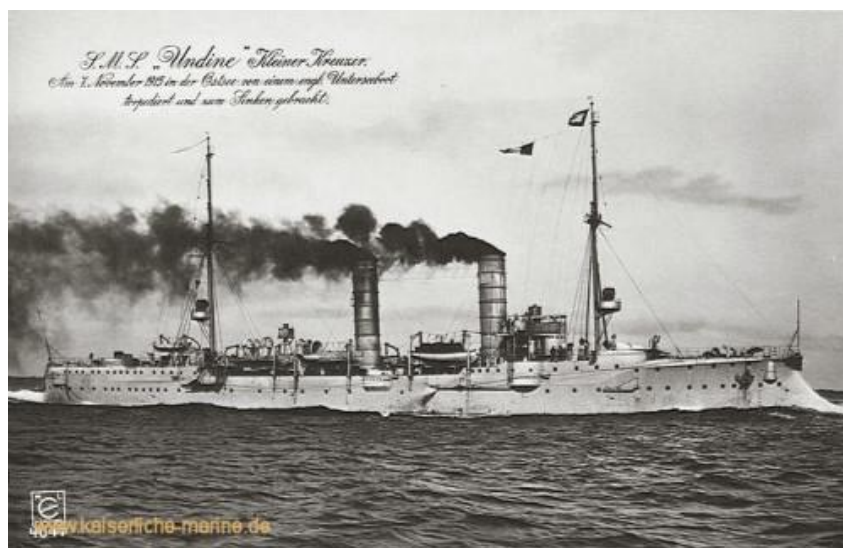


Photo source [HERE](#)

After the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, Undine was deployed to the Baltic Sea, serving in the Coastal Defense Division. She was attacked by the British submarine HMS E19 on 7 November 1915 and was hit by two torpedoes, she exploded and sank, most of the crew could be saved. Cornelius Sönnichsen was one of them.

Cornelius Sönnichsen was born in 1884 and was married to **Anni Katharina née Hansen** who was 5 years younger than him. Cornelius passed away in 1958, and Anny in 1979. I believe the two photos of a sailor are both of Cornelius minus his moustache. I blended the photos and the face, ears, nose lines are identical.



I then realised that many of the postcards in the batch were also addressed to Cornelius or his family members in Tönning. I have not been able to access church books or city address books of the region online, so these postcards serve as very valuable clues.

From the postcards sent to Cornelius, I gather that he and Anni had 7 children:

Son **Rudolf Sönnichsen** was born on April 16th, 1911, in the Tönning. He sent several postcards from all over the world in the 1930s, so I assume, like his father, he was perhaps a sailor or in the navy.



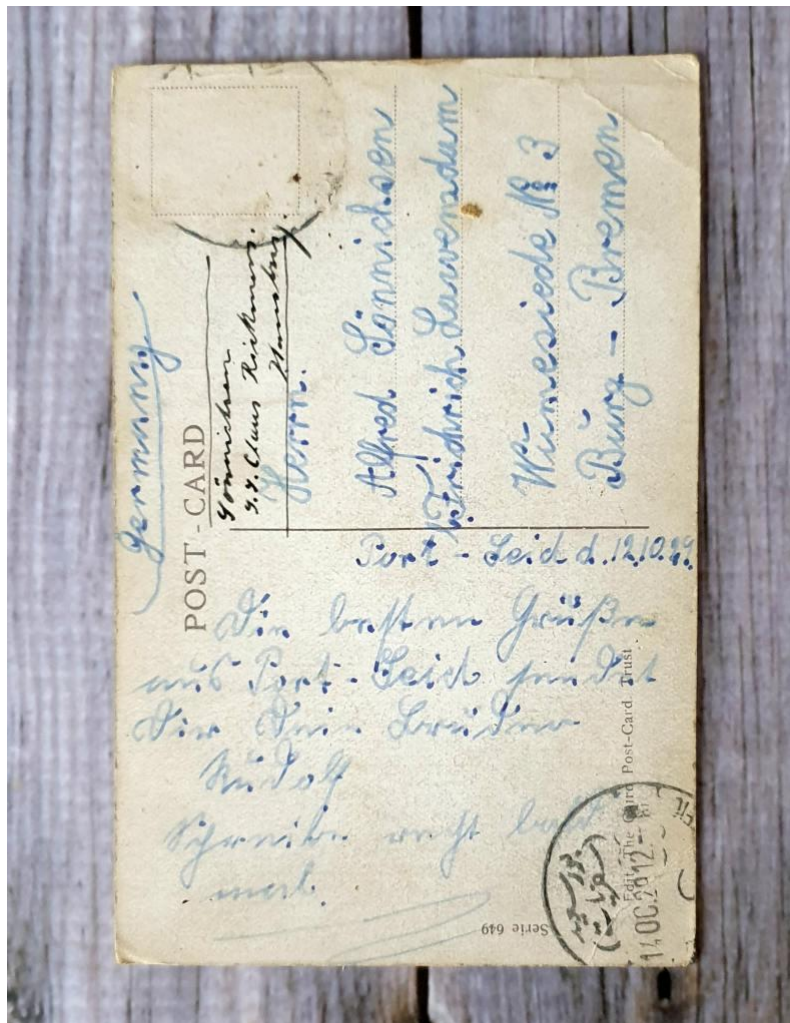
Perhaps these WWII-era photographs of sailors and crew includes Rudolf or one of the other sons of Cornelius.



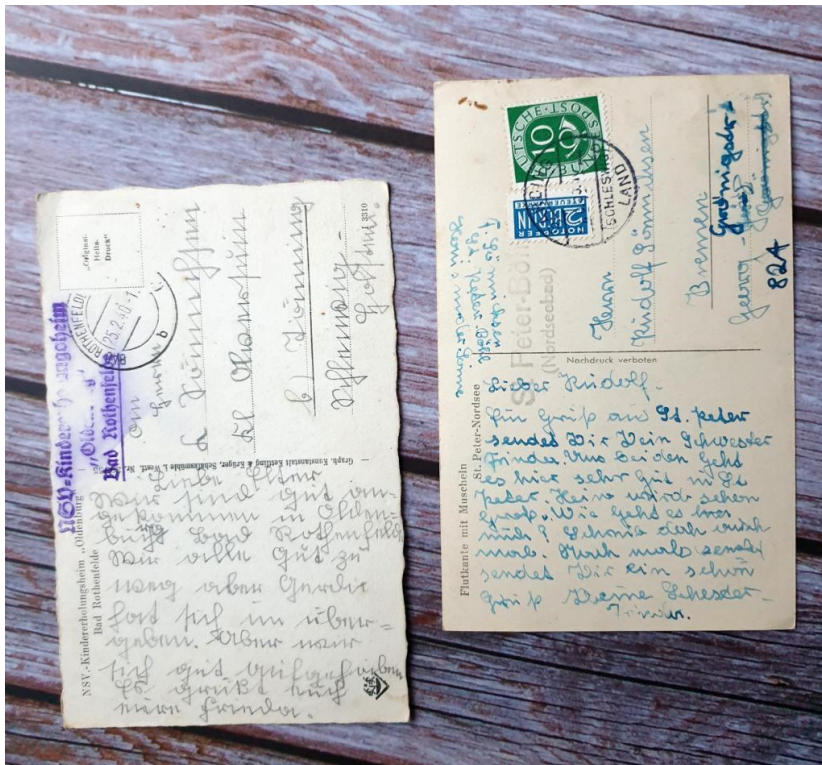
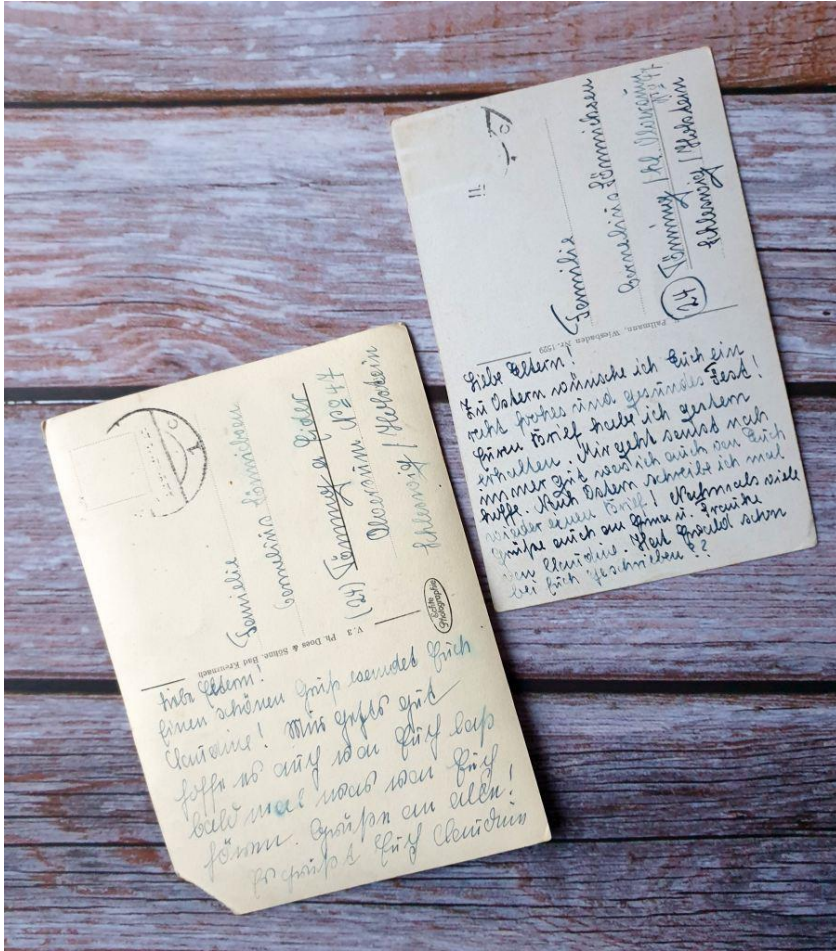
Sons **Artur/Arthur Sönnichsen** (born in 1921) died in 1943 while serving in WWII, and another son **Ewald Sönnichsen** (born in 1922) in 1945. They were buried on the soldiers' cemetery in Tönning together with other young men from the region who died in the two world wars (Click [HERE](#)).

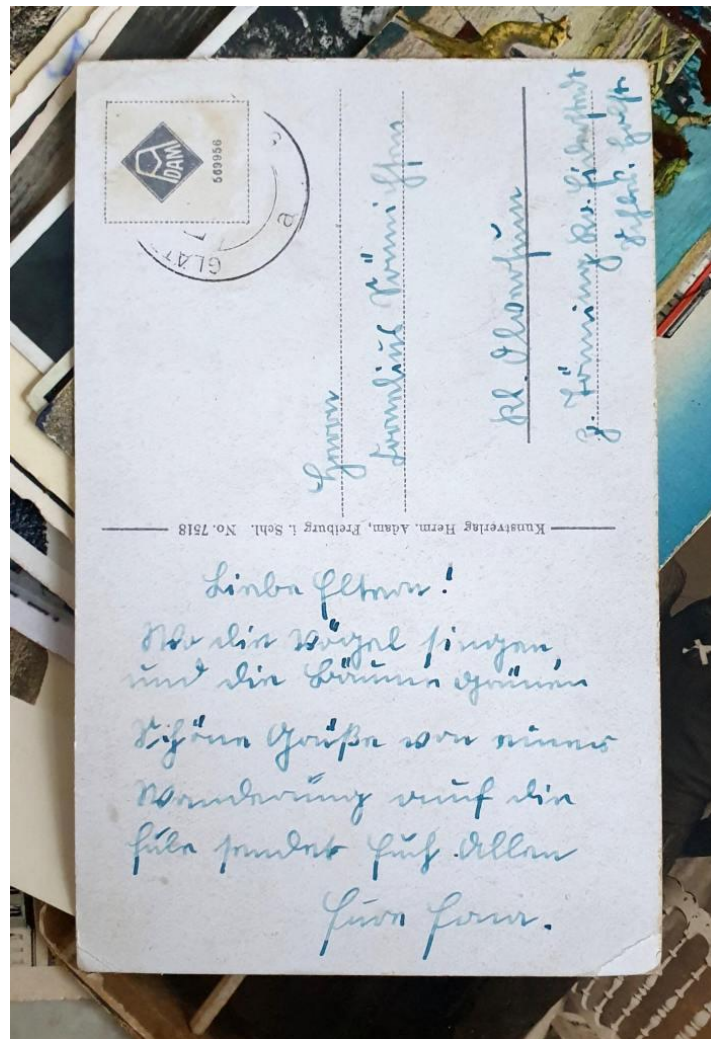
Familien- u. Vorname:		G-A 477/0182	<i>[Signature]</i>
Sönnichsen, Arthur			
geb. am:	in:	Kreis:	
2.2. 1921	(Tönning)	Uten Olver son	
Truppenteil:		li. 24 bew. 4.	
4. Komp. Gren. Regt. 209			
Ersatz-Truppenteil:		Erk.-N.: 963	
		Inf. Vers. Btl. 209 7. Kp.	
Dienstgrad:			
Oberge.			
Tag, Stunde, Ort u. Art des Verlustes:			
16.8.43 Minischalotte			
gefallen: et. Gef. Brückenvollheffer			
Urschriftliche Verlust-Listen Nr.: 40/Bd. 2 lfd. Nr. 23			
v1 <i>[Signature]</i>			

The oldest brother **Alfred Sönnichsen** was born on August 31st, 1909 in Tönning. He received postcards from Rudolf from overseas. I don't know what happened to him.



There also seemed to have been three sisters in the Sönnichsen family: **Frieda Sönnichsen**, **Erna Sönnichsen** and **Claudine Sönnichsen**. Nothing has come up on them in the papertrail, either.





I wish I knew more about the Sönnichsens from Tönning. There are many with the same surname living in the area close to the Danish border even today. Perhaps one of them is a descendant of Cornelius Sönnichsen. For now, I will let the found postcards tell the story of this sailor family from northern Germany.

Photos Without Families, originally shared on www.photoswithoutfamilies.blog