Commemorative medal
Wolfgang H. Gunzel, Artist
1984

Albrecht von Graefe, MD (1828-1870) is often credited as "the founder of modern ophthalmology" for his many contributions to the medical field through teaching, practice, invention and discovery. Among his achievements during his 20 years of committed service to ophthalmology, Graefe developed a treatment for chronic iridocyclitis, crafted a special knife to perform linear extraction of cataracts and was among the first to use the ophthalmoscope.

Graefe was particularly concerned with glaucoma. He distinguished between acute, chronic, and "simple" classifications of the disease and he was the first to use iridectomy to lower intraocular pressure. On **September 13, 1857** he reported his findings at the first International Congress of Ophthalmology held in Brussels. His dissemination of the technique established iridectomy as an important treatment, still used today for angle closure glaucoma.

Graefe lost his parents at the age of twelve but his father, a professor of ophthalmology at the University of Berlin, remained an influence throughout his life. Upon entering university, Graefe took classes from his father's successor and graduated from medical school in 1847. He then went abroad to continue his studies. While in Prague he decided to narrow his focus to ophthalmology. Graefe then traveled across Europe to Paris, Vienna, and London before returning to Berlin in 1850 as a fully trained ophthalmologist.

Graefe then opened a small clinic that he advertised as free health care for the poor. His business quickly expanded to a three-story eye hospital where he saw thousands of patients, taught lectures, and performed surgeries. In 1854 when the University of Berlin failed to provide him with publication funds, Grafe founded his own ophthalmic journal. Three years later he established the Deutsch Ophthalmological Society- the first ophthalmic society in the world.

Albrecht von Graefe succumbed to tuberculosis in 1870 at the age of 42. Throughout his short career, Graefe made lasting contributions to most every subspecialty and tirelessly devoted himself to enriching the field of ophthalmology.

Commemorative stamp
German Democratic Republic
1978