



1875 – 1945

AUGUST SIEBERG

Co-Founder of modern Macroseis-
mology and Earthquake Science

August Heinrich Sieberg was born in Aachen on December 23, 1875. After graduating from school in 1893, his interest in sciences, especially weather phenomena, led him to the study of natural sciences at the universities of Aachen, Strasbourg, Freiburg and Jena. After graduating from university, he became an assistant at the Meteorological Observatory in Aachen in 1896.

When the establishment of a German observation network for earthquakes began at the turn of the century, August Sieberg discovered his passion for seismology. As a result, he moved to the Imperial Main Station for Earthquake Science (*Kaiserliche Hauptstation für Erbebenforschung*) in Strasbourg in 1904. In the same year he published his first seismological textbook (*Handbuch der Erdbebenkunde*). From 1910, he also worked at the Strasbourg Central Office of the International Seismological Association (ISA), where he was responsible for compiling macroseismic data and reports.

After the end of the 1st World War, Oskar Hecker, another co-founder of the DGG, brought him to Jena, where a new Imperial Institute for Earthquake Research (*Reichsanstalt für Erdbebenforschung*) was to be established after the loss of the station in Strasbourg. After earning his doctorate in mineralogy in 1921, August Sieberg submitted a habilitation thesis on the distribution of earthquakes in 1922. In the same year, the DGG elected him as chairman of the Macroseismic Commission. In 1924 he also became professor of geophysics at the University of Jena.

Sieberg quickly became the leading German seismologist in the fields of macroseismics, earthquake geology and -geography. He developed a macroseismic scale for the quantitative evaluation of earthquakes by extending the *Mercalli-Cancani scale* in 1912, which since then bears his name (*Mercalli-Cancani-Sieberg scale: MCS scale*). He also published a 6-part intensity scale for tsunamis in 1927.

After the retirement of Oskar Hecker, Sieberg became first head and then director of the Imperial Institute for Earthquake Research in the years 1933 and 1936.

In addition to his passion for geophysics, August Sieberg also had a great artistic talent, which is reflected in the numerous book illustrations and maps he drew himself.

On November 18, 1945, August Sieberg died in Jena shortly before his 70th birthday.

DGG PRO – Public Relations & Outreach, Hannover

Modified after **Jacobs F. & Börngen M. (2019)**: Wiechert, Mintrop & Co. – Die 24 Gründungsväter der Deutschen Geophysikalischen Gesellschaft. Verlag EAGLE; **Pfaffl F. (2008)**: August H. Sieberg (1875-1945), der Begründer der modernen Makroseismik und Erdbebenkunde an der Universität Jena. Bericht Naturf. Ges. Bamberg, 80, 125-145.