

# The Nightingale Society

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## **Did You Know?**

- That Nightingale wanted nursing to be an independent profession; nurses would take medical instructions from doctors, but no doctor would hire, fire, discipline or promote a nurse; those decisions would be made by senior nurses.
- That her vision for the profession included a career path, with increases in salary and responsibility, through the ward sister to the superintendent or matron, which was a high paying job? That giving superintendents power to hire, discipline, etc., was to remove it from doctors, then 100% male when nurses were 100% female--it was an unspoken measure to prevent sexual harassment of vulnerable women nurses.
- That Nightingale consistently argued for good salaries and working conditions for nurses, holidays of at least a month per year; decent pensions; good living conditions during training; and hospital design to save nurses' energy for patient care?
- That she worked mightily to make patient care the nurse's function, instead of hospital cleaning? Hospitals should hire cleaners, she said, and nurses ensure that the job was done.
- That "nurses," before Nightingale's time, were not what we would recognize as nurses? In the army they were recruited from among the wives and widows of privates and non-commissioned officers (doctors were always officers), were paid less than cooks and laundresses, and reported to a sergeant. Before Nightingale's time they did not even speak to a doctor, but were subordinate to a sergeant. (The belief that Nightingale wanted nurses to be "subordinate to doctors" misses the point, for when her nursing school started, in 1860, women lacked even a high school education, let alone university. Doctors had university/medical qualifications.)
- Did you know that Nightingale succeeded in improving the status of nurses, from being a "domestic" service occupation in the 1861 Census, to being grouped with "medicine" in 1901? In the army, nurses became "officers," like doctors.
- That she did pioneering work on occupational health and safety for nurses, as early as 1858?

- **Did you know** that Nightingale worked to turn the terrible workhouse infirmaries into real hospitals? That she called for the same quality of care available to the rich also for the poor?
- That she did a pioneering study of maternal mortality post-childbirth, comparing death rates in hospitals, workhouses and home births? *Introductory Notes on Lying-in Institutions*.
- That Nightingale worked on healthcare reforms with other professionals? doctors, statisticians, engineers, architects?
- That hand washing is the single most effective means of infection control known, and that Nightingale began urging it in 1860?
- That hospital architects are turning back to Nightingale for her insights on sunlight and gardens in healing?
- That her writing is now available in a 16-volume *Collected Works of Florence Nightingale*? from more than 200 archives worldwide?

Don't want a 16-volume series for information on Nightingale? See the 200-page paperback: Lynn McDonald, *Florence Nightingale at First Hand* (London: Bloomsbury 2010) and *Florence Nightingale, Nursing and Health Care Today* (New York: Springer, 2018) 267 pages

For short articles on what Nightingale actually said and wrote see:  
<http://www.uoguelph.ca/~cwf/n/short/index.htm>

For (occasional) updates on Nightingale material, get on the Collected Works of Florence Nightingale email list (on the University of Guelph website; follow the shortlink at <https://is.gd/asojov>).



**Did you know** that there is a Nightingale Society? Which promotes knowledge of her great contribution to nursing and public health reform, plus its relevance today, and defends her reputation and legacy when attacked. To get on the list for (occasional) updates: **[contact@nightingalesociety.com](mailto:contact@nightingalesociety.com)**

**Did you know** that the Bicentenary of Florence Nightingale will be celebrated in 2020? **Do you want** to make this a real celebration, with a revisiting of her pioneering ideas and vision, to reflect on how they might be relevant to meeting the challenges of nursing and health care today? Get in touch!  
**[contact@nightingalesociety.com](mailto:contact@nightingalesociety.com)**.