

**FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, NURSE AND MATHEMATICIAN,
IS BORN IN FLORENCE, ITALY**

Her British parents were touring Europe when Florence Nightingale was born in Florence, Italy on May 12, 1820. Early on, the girl showed her father's bent for mathematics, to the dismay of her mother, who considered it unladylike. Fortunately, Mrs. Nightingale relented enough to allow her daughter a math tutor. As a young woman, Nightingale also took an interest in social issues and believed she had a calling from God. Against the family's strong objections, she took up nursing, a career regarded then as drawing uneducated, course, promiscuous and even drunken women. After studying nursing in hospitals around Europe, she arrived in 1854 in what is now Istanbul during the Crimean war. There, she took on the task of improving conditions so horrible that more soldiers were dying in the hospitals than on the battlefield. As a woman, she had to fight for her goals, and did so with her math skills, charting statistics that proved better sanitary conditions would lead to saving lives. Indeed, her improvements to medical facilities dropped soldiers' hospital mortality rate from 50 to 2.2%. When the war finished, she took her quest for improving hospital conditions to London, where her efforts caught the attention of Queen Victoria and the British prime minister. Nightingale became the first woman elected a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society. Bedridden in later years due to an illness she'd contracted in Crimea, Nightingale turned her energy to writing. She published 200 books, reports and pamphlets before her death at the age of 90 on August 13, 1910.

MAY 12, 1820