

## THE VGH ALUMNI CONNECTIONS to the NAME FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

By: Gloria Stephens, class 1953A

The following are several vignettes involving Florence Nightingale and the VGH School of Nursing Alumni which hopefully be interesting. The first of these short stories begins with a donated book to the VGH School of Nursing Archives, Bethune building, Halifax, NS.

### GIFT FROM FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE - 1862

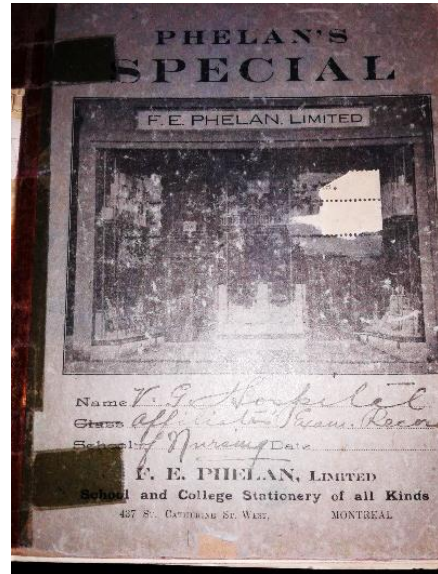
During the First World War a graduate from the Victoria General Hospital School of Nursing, Alvina Harvey, RRC, who served as a Nursing Sister, WW1, in London, England as a member of the Canadian Army Medical Corps. She was from the class of 1902. While serving in London Alvina became friends with an English nurse who presented her with this book, pictured on the right. The book, originally belonged to the English nurse's Aunt. The Aunt was a nursing student of Florence Nightingale in the 1862 class. This Aunt, apparently, was an exceptional student and for this, Florence gave her this book.

The book actually was a cover for taking notes and Alvina used this book to record names, dates and places in which class members affiliated during their training days, 1900 -1902. Also included where examination dates, names and the exam result of many classmates.

Eventually the book landed into the hands of another VGH graduate, Claire K Otto, class of 1920. Claire in later years, donated the book to the VGH Archives.

Alvina Harvey was from King's County, NS and following graduation she did Private Duty nursing in the Halifax and King's County areas. For her nursing services overseas, in France, during WW1, she was awarded the Royal Red Cross 1<sup>st</sup> class medal. Alvina died about 1918 and no further information could be located as to the circumstances of her death, so not sure if the death was war related but suspect if could be from the influenza epidemic at the time.

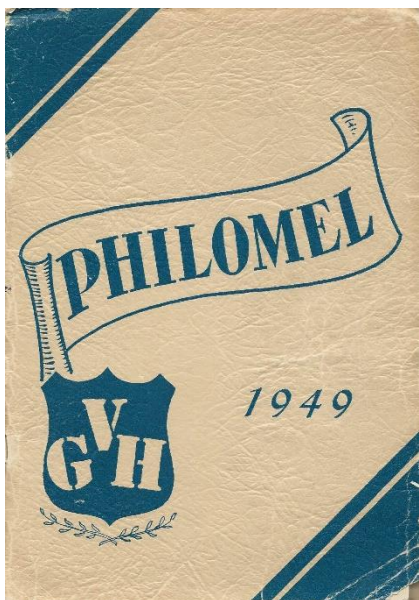
Claire Katherine Otto was born in Dartmouth, NS, the daughter of Pius and Sarah (Rafter) Otto. She entered the VG Nurses Training school the night of the Halifax Explosion and in her words, was an "earth shaking event". She did Private Duty around the Province following graduation in 1920 and as well did staff duty in Boston and New York. While here she was employed as a supervisor at one of the hospitals. In 1949 Claire joined the staff of the VG 'Out Patient Department'. One of the highlights of her eleven years there was the filming of the movie "The White Fortress". During WW2 she did volunteer work with the Blood Donor Clinic and also worked with the VON in Halifax, NS. Claire was President of the VG Nurses Alumni from 1932 to 1933, and was also a Honourary Life member of the VG Nurses Alumni. She died February 19, 1979, in Camp Hill hospital at the age of 83. She is buried in Christ Church cemetery, Dartmouth.



## VGH FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE FUND – 1934

About 1934, the Canadian Nurses Association developed a fund raising program to support the English Nurses Association to install a statue honouring and recognizing Florence Nightingale's nursing accomplishments. The VGH Alumni President, Mildred (Holloway) Hall, class 1909, suggested to the members that a Florence Nightingale Fund be organized and therefore could contribute to the statue. After all, she expressed; "The hospital is named after Queen Victoria, who gave Florence the highest nursing award in 1883, the Royal Red Cross medal". The motion was carried with enthusiasm. Everyone donated what they could and to contribute more to the fund, the members sponsored teas, bridge games and other such events. Before the end of 1934, a considerable amount was sent to England to help with the building of the statue. So, another important contribution made by the VGH Alumni to further the support of the professional nurse.

## 'THE PHILOMEL' - VGH CLASS YEARBOOK -1949



The class of 1949 produced the first school Year Book and dedicated the issue to the new VG, Victoria General hospital which was opened in 1948. Every class produced a Year Book from 1949 to 1995, with the exception of 1974. A copy of each year is housed in the VGH Archives, Bethune building, VG Site, Halifax, NS.

The title "Philomel" translated means nightingale. The title was chosen as a representative of the name Florence Nightingale, our founder of modern nursing.

In order to fund the publication, a variety of businesses were approached for support and donations made toward the production of the book. The last several pages were filled with the contributors' advertisement. This practice continued until the school closed in 1995.

The First Year Book committee:

BACK (Lt.-Rt.) J. Rundle, Art; M. Bate, Literature; M. Myers, Photography; H. Sweeney, Art; B. Reagh, Business; M. Mitchell, Music;

FRONT: (Lt.- Rt.) M. Penny, Humour; B.J. Purdy, Editor; S. Nott, Assistant Editor



The Superintendent of Nurses, at the time, was Maisie Miller and the Assistant Superintendent was Florence MacDonald. In 1950 these titles were changed to: Director of Nursing (DON). In M. Miller's speech at this class graduation ceremony, she quoted from Miss Daisy Bridges, Executive Secretary of ICN (International Council Nurses) at the fifth Anniversary conference in Stockholm:

*“The past is inspiring, the future is challenging, and the present is our responsibility. Let us therefore, while shouldering these responsible duties, and in the consciousness of the achievement of the past which we have inherited, so plan for the future with such wisdom, foresight and integrity that succeeding generations will find our page of history no less inspiring than those that have gone before”.* The Valedictory address was given by Sylvia Nott; *“we have been taught discipline, self-control, the importance of developing a sense of duty and acceptance of responsibility. ...that we may hold high the Florence Nightingale pledge”.*



M. K. MILLER  
Superintendent of Nurses



FRANCES MacDONALD  
Assistant Superintendent of Nurses

### THE NIGHTINGALE: further stories of the word:

When one sees the word nightingale it may make you think of certain other events and probably,



as a nurse, it quickly reflects Florence but to others it would be something else. For instance those interested in reading history may think of Homer’s ‘Odyssey’ where he described the nightingale singing in the woods and symbolizing the ‘coming of spring’, as it sings at night. The Nightingale is celebrated in literature and music for its beauty of its song and has been classified as the most beautiful song bird in the world. The song is symbolized as signifying creativity, purity, virtue and goodness.

#### NIGHTINGALE

morning: *“ Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.*

*It was the nightingale, and not the lark,  
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear.  
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree.  
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale”.*

A few examples in literature: Shakespeare ‘Romeo & Juliet’ when Juliet tries to persuade Romeo not to leave in the

Keat’s poem: ‘Ode of a Nightingale’ –

*The poem focuses on a speaker standing in a dark forest, listening to the beguiling and beautiful song of the nightingale bird. This provokes a deep and meandering meditation by the speaker on time, death, beauty, nature, and human suffering (something the speaker would very much like to escape!).*

The Nightingale is also mentioned in the Bible ‘Song of Songs 2:11-13’ -

These verses describe springtime in the Land of Israel -

*“Behold the autumn has passed, the rain has gone, blossoms are seen in the Land, the time of the nightingale has come, the voice of the turtledove is heard; the fig has formed its first fruit”.*

Of course the famous WW1 song, sung by Vera Lynn; ‘The Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square’.

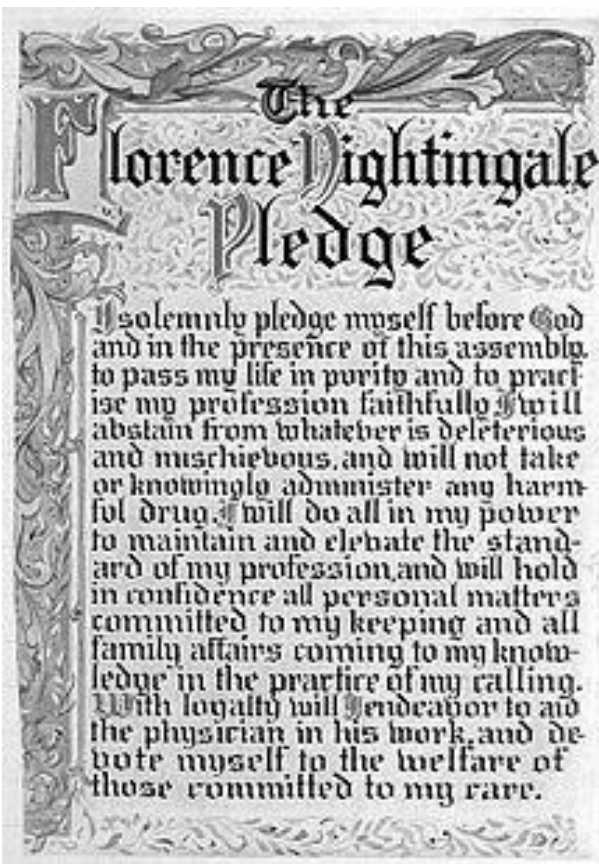
*The vines in blossom give forth fragrance",  
That certain night, the night we met  
There was magic abroad in the air  
There were angels dancing at the Ritz  
And a nightingale sang in Berkeley Square*

*I may be right, I may be wrong  
But I'm perfectly willing to swear  
That when you turned and smiled at me  
A nightingale sang in Berkeley Square*



BERKELEY SQUARE

## THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE PLEDGE AND ITS CONTROVERSARY



Lystra Gretter, a nursing instructor at the Farrand Grace Training School for Nurses, while head of a committee, developed the Nightingale pledge in 1893, Detroit, Michigan. The idea behind it was to commemorate the work of Florence Nightingale. She introduced the pledge as a tool for nurses to reaffirm their commitment to the profession (Finkelman and Kenner, 2010).

The pledge was modified in 1935 to read as follows (changes from original italicized):

*I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly to pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully. I will abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous, and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug. I will do all in my power to maintain and elevate the standard of my profession and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping and all family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my calling. With loyalty will I aid the physician in his work, and as a missionary of health, I will dedicate myself to devoted service for human welfare'.*

*calling. With loyalty will I aid the physician in his work, and as a missionary of health, I will dedicate myself to devoted service for human welfare'.*

New graduates in the practice often recite the pledge as a modified version of the “Hippocratic Oath.” Throughout the world, nurses have used the Nightingale pledge to affirm their commitment to the ethical practice and the pledge has symbolically cemented the commitment by nurses to the nursing profession. (Haigh, 2013). All nurses have not repeated the pledge at graduation as in current times there has been objection to some of the phrases, such as; “will not take... harmful drug” and “loyal to physicians”. While the pledge hasn’t drastically changed, many nursing

schools that still use the Nightingale Pledge have made updates to the earlier versions. One change was made specifically to remove the phrase, “loyal to physicians” to promote more independence in the nursing profession.

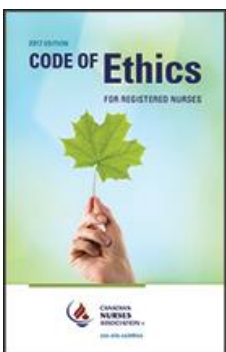
Others believe that the pledge is still relevant to the profession because the same issues that affected nurses, in the early 1900s, also affect them today and therefore should keep the original components of the pledge because they symbolize a nurse’s commitment to the practice (Finkelman and Kenner, 2010).

The above controversy has created new problems for nurses who want to change the pledge to suit the modern nursing context, but still keep its originality. This issue has created two new problems for professional nurses. First, nurses need to assure the public that they are still committed to their practice by associating with the original words of the Nightingale pledge.

Secondly, they need to assure the public that they can meet modern nursing challenges by subscribing to a new set of ethical rules, which address modern nursing challenges. It is crucial to solve this issue to avoid integrity issues because the failure to do so may significantly affect the reputation of nurses.

Seems in many instances, the public take nurses ‘for granted’ and perhaps that may be because many nurses take themselves ‘for granted’ instead of pushing forward the commitment they have for their ‘Duty of Care’ and the welfare of the community as a whole.

*This is the recent CNA ‘Code of Ethics’ prepared in 2017 which contents include:*



- medical assistance in dying
- advance care planning
- equity
- primary health care
- job action
- workplace bullying
- ethical models for reflection including Oberle and Raffin Bouchal
- advocating for quality work environments

### **THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE DOLL – 1994**

The International Council of Nurses (ICN), History of Nursing Branch was held in Vancouver, BC in 1994, with lectures and display booths in the lecture hall of St. Paul’s Hospital, compliments of St. Paul’s hospital. Part of the opening ceremony was a slide/tape presentation, by Gloria Stephens, of the Sisters of Charity and their involvement in the founding of St. Paul’s hospital and its history. The display booths represented various countries from Europe and Asia. Members representing the UK sold authentic Florence Nightingale dolls for \$210, plus tax.

In the Florence Nightingale museum in London, England, much of her clothing, boots, letters and other artifacts including her lamp are located at the popular museum on Lambeth Place Road. The sculptor, British-born Terry Karselis, used the museum collection to design the clothes and also the bronze bust of Miss Nightingale to create the classic head for the doll. The clothing is based on a painting of her as well as actual dresses and shoes worn, that are on display in the museum.

The doll is 18 inches tall and dressed in the hand-tailored outfit. Her coat and shirt are fine tan worsted wool, trimmed with brown piping ribbon. The jacket is closed with seven brown glass buttons and has three buttons on each shoulder as epaulettes. She wears a pin at the top of her jacket.



Her cotton chemise and petticoat are trimmed in fine lace. Her cap is fashioned with the same lace pattern, with rosettes at the ears. She wears painted black shoes, patterned from the originals. Her hose are traditional black sheer.

The lamp, or lantern, that she carries in her right hand is based on the original in the museum. The head, chest, arms, hands, legs and shoes are made of fine bisque porcelain, kiln-fired and painted by hand. As with dolls of this quality, the body is cloth.

This Florence Nightingale Doll carries a certificate of authenticity bearing the number of the doll. All money raised from the sale of these dolls went toward scholarships and awards for nurses in the UK.

*Author, Gloria Stephens was Nurse Clinician at St. Paul's hospital (SPH) and co-chairman of the Planning Committee for this*

*ICN conference at the SPH site. She prepared and developed the slide/tape presentation used at the Opening Ceremony. Gloria is the proud owner of this Florence Nightingale doll.*

### **THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE VGH AWARD - 2016**

**FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE AWARD:** Annually, the VGH Alumni Executive and Board will select a member, who meets the criteria, to receive the 'Florence Nightingale Award' in recognition of their contribution to nursing and the Alumni. This is presented during the AGM, which is held in June. This award was initiated in 2016 by Maureen Manuge, class 1972 A, who also donated the image of a nurse. Maureen provides pictures of the recipient receiving the award from the President and this information is documented into a binder which is stored in the VGH Archives. A plaque is attached to the nurse figure with the winners & date engraved, both being stored in the VGH Archives, Bethune building.



The following are recipients of this award:

- |                                     |                                   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2016 – Madeleine McNeil, class 1947 | 2019 – Margaret Arklie class '60B |
| 2017 – Shirley Stark, class 1954 A  | 2022 – Nina Wickens, class '60B   |
| 2018 – Joyce Baxter, class 1961B    | 2023 – Gloria Stephens, class'53A |

### **FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE ROYAL DAULTON– 2019**

Three Meikle sisters from Cape Breton, NS, graduated from the Victoria General Hospital School of Nursing: Jessie, class 1953A, Joyce, class 1955A and Frances, class 1965B. This story involves Joyce and Frances.

Eleanor 'Joyce' Meikle, following graduation, nursed in the USA and several provinces in Canada. Joyce moved to Akron, Ohio, where her older sister Jessie lived with her husband, Dr Carl Mader. Joyce worked at St, Thomas Hospital before moving to Miramichi, NB, where she

married William Burchill. They had two sons, David and Kevin, both received NB ‘Athlete of the Year’ Awards in 1983 and both were on the Canadian 1984 Olympia Team. Joyce then worked in her husband’s law office. Joyce died June 15, 2019.

In December 2019 her sister Frances (VG Grad) donated a Royal Daulton figurine of Florence Nightingale to the VGH Archives in memory of her sister Joyce (Meikle) Burchill.



Frances Meikle, graduate in the 1965B class and shortly after graduating moved to the States to work. Here she married Tom Cheek and still lives in the States. As Manager of the VGH Nurses Archives I (Gloria Stephens) had a glass cover made to protect this figure in a way that it may be seen in different directions and thus protected.



### OTHER FACTS ABOUT FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

A few interesting facts in the life of Florence Nightingale: In 1907, she became the first woman to be awarded the Order of Merit. In 1908, she was given the Honorary Freedom of the City of London. From 1857 onwards, Nightingale suffered poor health.

On her first interlude in the Crimea, Nightingale fell ill with a malady that the British troops called “Crimean Fever,” later identified as almost certainly spondylitis, an inflammation of the vertebrae that would leave her in pain and bedridden for much of her life. She died in her sleep at home in London of ‘Heart Failure’ in 1910 having been born in Florence, Italy in 1820 to English parents. She was named after this place and she loved to visit.

### THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE NATIONAL AWARD

The Florence Nightingale National Award in 2021 was awarded to Mrs Malini. Mrs Malini a.k.a “Sister Malini” known by all her doctors, staff and patients of the Father Muller Medical College Hospital has dedicated all her working life at the hospital in nursing care and helped many patients in receiving healthcare through the portals of the 141-year institution.



Mrs. Malini



Having over 29 years of service, she still continues in her energetic fashion in helping the whole health care fraternity in the Nitty-gritties of the day, helping patients with advice and guidance through the maze of corridors of the hospital, being patient and humble at all times without losing her calm. She has been the “GO-TO” person for all in times of trouble in the hospital and continues to hold dear.

## THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE STATUE



The statue of Florence Nightingale is an outdoor Grade II-listed sculpture in London, United Kingdom. It was sculpted in 1915 by Arthur George Walker, and is a subsidiary part of the Guards Crimean War Memorial.



THE BASE OF THE STATUE

The statue was commissioned in 1910 to reflect on and memorialize the Crimean War, but was unveiled five years later in the thick of the First World War, on the 24 February 1915. It was sculpted by Arthur George Walker (1861–1939), cast by Fiorini & Co in Battersea, and the architect was the Earl of Pembroke and was responsible for selecting Walker.

Walker exhibited the work at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society's Eleventh Exhibition in 1916, at the Royal Academy in Burlington House. There the statue was positioned in the Hall of Heroes, the grandest of the exhibition rooms, inspired by Byzantine architecture and with ceiling paintings on the theme of humanity, while the zeppelin raids threatened the Academy from above.

A small version of Walker's Nightingale statue is now displayed in Downing Street as part of the Government Art Collection, showing the central place she still occupies in the national psyche.

Walker also produced a marble memorial relief of Nightingale for the crypt of St Paul's, while a plaster version was set up in the chapel of St Thomas's Hospital.

Arthur George Walker relied on photographs of Nightingale such as this studio portrait by CE Goodman from around 1858© Wellcome Collection (public domain)

Arthur George Walker was born in Hackney. During his studies at the Royal Academy Schools, he exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy, eventually being appointed a Royal Academician towards the end of his life, in 1936. Walker produced figurative and monumental sculpture, and was also a painter, book illuminator and mosaic designer. Works in public collections include the quintessentially 1920s *Christ at the Whipping Post* (Tate Britain), the statues of William Morris and the bookbinder Thomas Payne on the Exhibition Road façade of the Victoria and Albert Museum, and a group of fascinating interiors of his Chelsea studio (featuring many identifiable examples of his work) at the Royal Academy.

Walker portrayed Nightingale at about the age of 36, as she appears in the studio portraits by CE Goodman, and added in her spurious ancient Greek or Roman lamp (it is likely that she carried a paper lantern). He also relied on the busts of 1856–7 by John Steell, possibly augmented by documentary sources describing her appearance. Queen Victoria, who met her on several occasions, wrote in her diary 'She is tall, & slight, with fine dark eyes, & must have been very pretty, but now she looks very thin & care worn' (21 September 1856). She then describes how the simple little cap Nightingale wore concealed her chopped off hair 'on account of the insects with which the poor men were covered in the Hospitals!'



## The Florence Nightingale Medal

The Florence Nightingale Medal is an international award presented to those distinguished in nursing and named after British nurse Florence Nightingale.



The Florence Nightingale Medal was instituted in 1912 by the International Committee of the Red Cross. It is the highest international distinction a nurse can achieve and is awarded to nurses or nursing aides for “*exceptional courage and devotion to the wounded, sick or disabled or to civilian victims of a conflict or disaster*” or “*exemplary services or a creative and pioneering spirit in the areas of public health or nursing education*“. (The Red Cross was founded in 1872 by Henry Dunant, Geneva, Switzerland and was the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize)

The medal was restricted to female nurses until regulation changes in 1991. Under the new regulations, it is open to both women and men and is awarded every two years to a maximum number of fifty recipients worldwide.

The vesica piscis-shaped medal is composed of gold and silver-gilt and bears, on the obverse, a portrait of Florence Nightingale surrounded by the words ‘*Ad memoriam Florence Nightingale 1820-1910*’.

On the reverse, the name of the recipient and the date of the award are engraved, surrounded by the inscription ‘*Pro vera misericordia et cara humanitate perennis decor universalis*’ (‘*true and loving humanitarianism – a lasting general propriety*’).

The medal is attached to a white and red ribbon by a clasp featuring a red enamel cross encircled by a green laurel crown. Recipients are also presented with a parchment diploma of the award and, from 1927, a miniature version of the medal that could be more easily worn. Approximately 1549 medals have been awarded with 7 being awarded posthumously. This medal is the highest international medal to be awarded to a nurse.

A Canadian nurse, Margaret Clothilde MacDonald, was awarded this medal in 1918.



Margaret was born and lived in Bailey’s Brook, NS (1873-1948). She died there at age 75 and before this, she had a remarkable life. She was born in a wealthy family so she took advantage of this and earned a ‘well-rounded’ education, started at an early age. She graduated from Mount St Vincent Academy and from the Charity Hospital Training School for Nursing, New York, in 1895. She did several different nursing jobs in various places in the United States and then found herself interested in

being a military nurse. This was a major challenge, to enter the ‘male dominated military, especially the medical field’. Margaret nursed in the Spanish/American War and then in the South African War. Following this she returned to Canada and became Head Nurse of the Canadian Army nurse Corps. She ‘ruled’ with a strict standard of only having well-trained nurses admitted as she wanted to build up a strong reputation for the nursing corps. She was active during WW1 as she soon showed her leadership skills and was eventually given the rank of Major, the first in the British Empire. During WW1 she was made Matron-in-Chief of all the Canadian Army Medical Corps Nursing Service. For all her achievements she was awarded the Royal Red Cross 1<sup>st</sup> Class medal in 1916 and the Florence Nightingale Medal in 1918, as mentioned before. In 1983 Margaret was awarded the DDL from SFX University.



## THE NIGHTINGALE JEWEL

The Nightingale Jewel, in the form of a brooch, was given to Florence by Queen Victoria in 1855. This gold brooch is said to have been designed by Prince Albert. It is engraved with a dedication from Queen Victoria, “*To Miss Florence Nightingale, as a mark of esteem and gratitude for her devotion towards the Queen’s brave soldiers, from Victoria R. 1855*”. The reference here refers to Florence’s dedication and caring of the soldiers during the Crimean War and all the innovations that she made to improve the nursing care in general and to ‘raise the statue’ of the qualified nurse within a profession. Queen Victoria and Florence were friends.



The jewel can be viewed in the National Army Museum, London, England.

## ST. THOMAS HOSPITAL AND SCHOOL OF NURSING

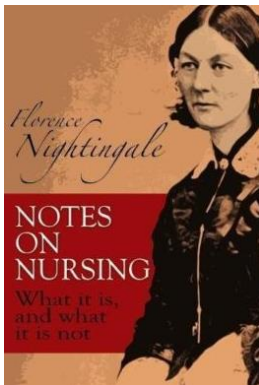
When Florence Nightingale returned home to Britain, after the war, she was shocked to receive a hero’s welcome! She tried to avoid the spotlight, however, Queen Victoria awarded Nightingale with an engraved brooch and 250,000 Pounds! Nightingale used this money to establish the St. Thomas Training School for Nurses on July 9, 1860. It is now called the Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery and is also part of King's College London.



*Florence Nightingale and nursing students at her nursing school. Source: (www.britishempire.co.uk)*

## ‘NOTES ON NURSING’, FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

Nightingale wrote extensively and one being important to the nursing profession and nurses was titled: ‘Notes on Nursing’. Her gentle and sensible approach to caregiving is still used in nursing today. The example she set has inspired nurses around the world. International Nurses Day is observed on her birthday, May 12.



Despite her selfless devotion to the soldiers housed at Scutari, and the legend that grew around her as a nurse, it’s important to remember that Nightingale was not really a nurse even though she worked in hospitals, ‘as-on-the-job-training’. She was a scientist, a data-gatherer, a writer, a trainer, a manager, an organizer, an analyst, and a campaigner; these varied skills, combined with an enormous appetite for hard work and a driven personality characterized her professional life. There is a copy of ‘Notes on Nursing’ in the VGH Nurses Archives, Halifax, NS.