

Today in Math History...

-8 September 1584

Gregory of Saint Vincent born. Gregory's reputation was that of a brilliant mathematician. Leibniz reportedly included him with Descartes and Fermat as one of the founders of analytic geometry. He is reported to be the first to settle Zeno's Achilles paradox, doing it the way you would do it today, summing an infinite geometric series (see the problem below).

Here is Zeno's Paradox in a nutshell: I am in a room and want to leave. I must first cover half the distance from here to the door. Having done that, I must then cover half the remaining distance to the door. Having done that, I must cover half the remaining distance to the door. And so forth, forever, so I cannot get to the door. Solve the so-called paradox by summing an infinite geometric series.