





### **Octant**

Janet Taylor, 1845-1860

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Collection of Historical Scientific Instruments

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Octants, like this one, were popular navigational tools used by 18th and 19th century mariners while at sea to determine latitude by observing the height of celestial bodies. The design of this octant is typical for its time, but it is exceptional in one very important way - its maker was a woman. Janet Taylor (1804-1870) was a 19th century English maverick in the field of celestial navigation. In addition to an instrument maker, she was prolific writer and astute astronomer, teacher, inventor, compass adjuster and savvy businesswoman, distinguishing herself in a society and professions dominated by men. Still, despite international acclaim for her innovative lunar charts, she was never fully accepted by the elite of the British naval world. Taylor struggled tirelessly to overcome sex and class discrimination, petitioning (with little success) for official government recognition of her many practical contributions to celestial navigation.

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