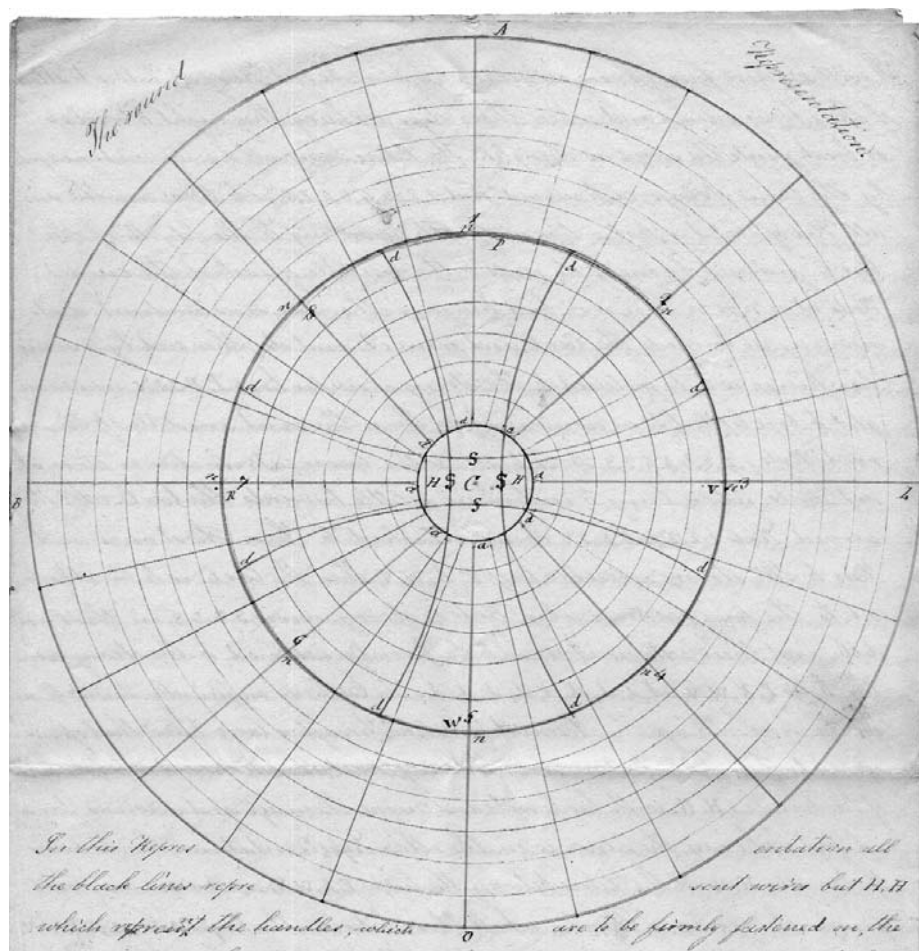


# From the Archives

Since 1780, the Academy's sponsorship of exploration and innovation has made it a natural place for both Fellows and members of the public to present, discuss, and publish new ideas in science and technology. The Academy's archives hold many communications, both practical and philosophical, some of which were published in the *Memoirs* or *Proceedings*.

H. Strait of Rensselaer County, New York, in a letter to the Academy dated December 10, 1832, submitted his plan for the construction and motion of wings for human flight. Mr. Strait was not a member of the Academy.

Having given considerable attention to the study of Aeronauticks and discovered a principle, which I deem will be eminently useful and applicable; if put in practice, to that noble and neglected Branch of rational Science, and being myself unable from want of sufficient money and mechanical skill to give it a complete investigation by Experiment I am constrained either to solicit assistance or drop it where it is. Having therefore examined its Reasons with Care and Attention, I chose what I deemed to be the most advisable alternative and resolved immediately to send you my plan with the Reasons in its support in order to solicit your assistance. The importance of the Object, if it shall prove to be universally applicable, the eminent utility it will be to the Geographer, the Traveller, the Philosopher, and to Posterity: the Sublimity it will present to the inspired Poet and Observer of the Beauties of Nature; nay more a sincere desire to advance and promote the Happiness of the whole human Family, and to make them at once alive to the noblest feelings of the Heart and conscious of the high Powers with which they are intrusted to improve and control for the most exalted purposes. . . . Is now high time that the Reasons of Flying which have as yet stood unrefuted and uninvestigated, should receive a rational demonstration of their solidity or fallacy by the established laws of natural Philosophy.



H. Strait's eight-page letter to the American Academy describing his design for wings for human flight included two illustrations, this one for "The round Representation." The Aeronaut was to place himself in Car C, "take hold of the handles H,H," and "raise them up and down as fast as he can."