

jeweller and dedicated naturalist, sold many of Abbot's watercolours and specimens, while purchasing others for his own collection. By 1816 Francillon owned 297 of Abbot's bird portraits and 2,843 of his watercolours of arthropods. Of the latter 331 illustrated the life cycle of butterflies, moths, grasshoppers, or beetles along with a representative food plant. The remaining watercolours portrayed specimens individually or grouped in geometric patterns. After Francillon's death, Abbot made his own arrangements for sales of drawings and specimens and found a steady market for both.<sup>16</sup>

At the heart of Abbot's skill as an artist was his delicate application of clear colour. By 1782 he had begun to use a mixture of gum bouge and indigo for the colour green rather than the sap green that tended to darken with time. His compositions showing insect metamorphosis gradually became more decorative and elaborate. His early North American watercolours depicted adult insects as inert specimens with expanded wings radiating from a central food plant normally bearing either flower or fruit (figure 3). Abbot selected this arrangement because these insects 'commonly hide their most beautiful colours when at rest', and 'neither are they admitted in that position in the Cabinets of the Curious'.<sup>17</sup> He portrayed the larval and pupal stages in typical positions—on leaves or stems or at the base of the plant. Most caterpillars appear in their final metamorphic instar. In some drawings they crawl on partially eaten leaves.

As presaged by his caterpillars, Abbot's adult insects became more naturalistic in the early 1800s. In contrast to his earlier reliance on specimen-like reproductions, his newer compositions illustrated the growing influence of the natural beauty he encountered in Georgia on his artistic consciousness. Abbot began, for example, to illustrate the underside of a butterfly by drawing the insect with folded, upright wings as it rested on the larval food plant, its body casting a delicate shadow across leaf or flower (figure 4).

In some watercolours, Abbot devoted more care to the representation of the insect than to its food plant. A meeting with the Savannah pharmacist and naturalist Augustus Gottlieb Oemler in 1805 resulted in significant improvements in the accuracy of Abbot's plant delineations. Oemler was amazed that Abbot was unschooled in the scientific study of natural history and was unaware of Carl Linnaeus's system of binomial nomenclature. After he had explained the Linnaean system to Abbot, Oemler noted that the naturalist corrected his practice of illustrating different 'numbers of stamens on the same flower'.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Abbot's best efforts gave equal attention to both creature and