

a geometric composition totally unlike the originals. Indeed, only those etchings illustrating *The Natural History of the Rarer Lepidopterous Insects of Georgia* reflect Abbot's actual compositions, but even here exceptions exist as in the illustration of the *Brown and Yellow Skipper Butterfly* (*Wallengrenia otho*) with its fantasy landscape embellishing Abbot's watercolour.

Abbot spent his last years living in Bulloch County, Georgia, on land owned by William E. McElveen. Abbot's wife had died in 1817 and his son in 1826. In 1839 Abbot bequeathed all his possessions to McElveen.<sup>36</sup> Abbot died sometime after the 1840 census of Bulloch County was filed on October 27; the exact date of his death is not recorded. McElveen buried his friend in his family's cemetery. Not long afterward, Oemler went to see McElveen hoping to purchase Abbot's papers, watercolours, or colours, but nothing remained—the McElveen children 'had used up all'.<sup>37</sup>

Much of Abbot's work, however, did survive. His exquisite images of Georgia's bird, insect, and plant life established Abbot as one of the premier naturalist artists of the nineteenth century. In his watercolours Abbot combined a talent for composition and design with the technical skill for capturing the textures of his subjects. While his bird portraits with their dominant figures imposed upon a miniaturised background never achieved the animation and vigour characteristic of John James Audubon, in his watercolours of insects and plants Abbot created fresh and elegant compositions unparalleled in natural history.

#### REFERENCES

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- 1 William Swainson, *Taxidermy, with the Biography of the Zoologists, and Notices of Their Works* (London, 1840), p.99; see Phil Parkinson, 'Natural History Drawings and Watercolours by John Abbot, "the Aurelian", Naturalist of Georgia, in the Alexander Turnbull Library', *Turnbull Library Record*, 11 (May 1978), 26-36, and his introduction to *John Abbot's Insects of Georgia*, fasc. 1 (Wellington, 1983), 8p.; A.T.L. Picture Coll., E 272.