

History (1770-82). Drury showed Abbot his extensive insect collection and offered the young man some specimens to draw. With renewed excitement, Abbot continued raising butterflies and moths, increased his collecting expeditions into the English countryside, and began to purchase specimens from other countries such as Jamaica and Surinam. Later Abbot recalled that he 'began to have a respectable Collection' but 'craved more'.⁶ He continued to illustrate specimens in watercolour and took pains to identify each one in an accompanying note.

Meanwhile, even though Abbot's father encouraged his son's artistic and scientific interests, he selected a practical career for him in the law. An attorney in the Court of King's Bench, Plea Side, the elder Abbot in February 1769 arranged for John to clerk in his law office. However, natural history not 'Deeds, Conveyances & Wills' gripped young Abbot's attention.⁷ When not occupied with legal duties, he collected and illustrated specimens. In 1770 Abbot's budding reputation as an artist enabled him to exhibit two insect watercolours at the Society of Artists of Great Britain. His friendship with Henry Smeathman, 'a brother Flycatcher' who left London in 1771 to collect natural history specimens in Sierre Leone, Madagascar, and the West Indies, prompted Abbot to dream of a similar venture to North America. First he considered New Orleans, but Robert Beverley's *History and Present State of Virginia* (1705; 2nd ed. 1722) stirred his imagination with its glowing descriptions of that colony's natural environment. His thoughts 'ingrossed by Natural history', Abbot selected Virginia.⁸

Other English naturalists familiar with Abbot's talents sponsored his journey. The Royal Society of London and two private collectors, Thomas Martyn and Dru Drury, commissioned him to collect natural history specimens. Aboard Captain Thomas Woodford's *Royal Exchange*, Abbot sailed from the English port city of Deal in July 1773 and arrived at the mouth of the James River in Virginia on the sixteenth of September.⁹ Abbot brought from London the standard collecting equipment of nets and preserving materials, as well as art supplies and several important books on natural history, including *Directions for Bringing Over Seeds and Plants, from the East-Indies and Other Distant Countries, in a State of Vegetation* (1771). Abbot found this treatise most useful. He annotated the entomology section with lists of insects, preceding each with a numeral to form a tabulation of his collecting activities.¹⁰ In the weeks following his arrival, Abbot collected specimens representing 570 different insect species. He subsequently prepared a report on the geology of the region, collected additional insects, and raised a number of butterflies and moths from larvae. He continued his practice of recording pertinent