

Sorsby, Nicholas Turner ^[1]

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by Dorothy Long, 1994

20 June 1818–27 Feb. 1868

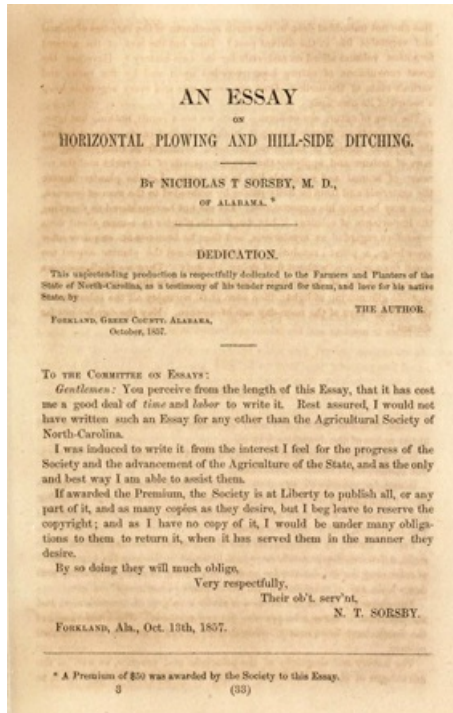


Image of the title page from Dr. Nicholas T. Sorsby's prize-winning essay "On Horizontal Plowing and Hill-Side Ditching," from the *Transactions of the North Carolina Agricultural Society* 1857.

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^[2]Nicholas Turner Sorsby, physician, surgeon, and agriculturalist, the son of Rebecca Williams and Alexander Sorsby, was born in [Nash County](#) ^[3]. After the death of his father, while Nicholas was still an infant, the family moved to Alabama, where Mrs. Sorsby married E. D. Whitehead. Referred to as "Major E.D.W." at one time by Sorsby, Whitehead was listed as the young man's guardian when he entered the [University of Virginia](#) ^[4] in 1835 from his home in Havanna, Ala. Having remained away for the term 1838–39, Sorsby was graduated in 1840 from the university's School of Moral Philosophy. The next year he received a medical degree from the [University of Pennsylvania](#) ^[5] and then spent four years studying in Paris.

For some years Sorsby was a physician and planter in Greene County, Ala., where his address in 1857 was Forkland. He married Ann Hill, and they were the parents of a daughter, Eugenia. In 1856 he became the guardian of Catherine R., Amanda A., Nicholas C., and Virginia H., minor heirs of his brother, Alexander W., of Autauga County, Ala.

Dr. Sorsby was the author of "Indian Millet, or Dourah Corn," published in the U.S. Patent Office report *Report of the Commissioner of Patents for the Year 1854: Agriculture* (1855). His prize-winning essay, "[On Horizontal Plowing and Hill-Side Ditching](#)," ^[6] which appeared as a 35-page article in *Transactions of the North-Carolina State Agricultural Society, for 1857* (1858), is a detailed description of [antebellum farming](#) ^[7] and contains a plea for better maintenance of the fertility of the soil. He was awarded a silver pitcher for this essay at the [North Carolina State Fair](#) ^[8]. It was also published as a pamphlet in Mobile, Ala., in 1860. During the [Civil War](#) ^[9] Sorsby served as a surgeon in the Confederate army. He was buried in Eutaw, Ala. In 1902 his daughter in Montgomery gave a photograph of the portrait she owned to the state archives.

References:

[Archives](#), [University of Virginia](#) and [University of Pennsylvania](#).

Family correspondence (Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery).

Greensboro *Alabama Beacon*, 7 Mar. 1868.

J. M. Watson, *Abstracts of Early Records of Nash County, North Carolina* (1963).

Probate Minutes, 1856, Autauga County (Prattville, Ala.).

Additional Resources:

Sorsby, Nicholas T. "An Essay on Horizontal Plowing and Hill-Side Ditching." In the North Carolina Agricultural Society Meeting (1857: Raleigh, N.C.), *Transactions of the North-Carolina State Agricultural Society for 1857: with the Constitution and by-laws of the society, Act of Incorporation, &c., &c.* Raleigh, N.C.: The North Carolina Agricultural Society. 1858. <https://archive.org/details/transactionsofno00nort> [10] (accessed January 23, 2014).

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