Edmund Ruffin was a most unusual farmer. His ability to sense causes of soil infertility and possible remedies border on the uncanny. Although he had only limited formal schooling, he sought out and read whatever literature relating to soil management that was available. He was meticulous in all of his work and kept accurate and detailed records. He became a prodigious writer on matters dealing not only with soil fertility, but also of agriculture in general and governmental policies. He was indeed one of the outstanding Americans of his time.

Unfortunately, because of the ravages of the Civil War especially in Ruffin's area of operation, his work and writings became largely obliterated. Recently, renewed attention has been given to the work of Ruffin and soil scientists in general on becoming acquainted with this work have been amazed as regards Ruffin's accurate pioneer work relating to soil fertility, and particularly to soil acidity and liming. In order to fully appreciate Ruffin and his work, one must read some of his writings and become acquainted with the agricultural conditions and soil science of his day.

At that time or shortly before the following were active: Antoine Laurent Lavosier (1743-1794) the father of scientific chemistry; Sir Humphrey Davy (1778-1829) a pioneer soil chemist; George Washington (1732-1799) first U. S. President and a farmer; Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) third U. S. President and large landowner.

The following list of publications provides good reading as regards Ruffin's work and some of his contemporaries and related matters.
