



In Justin Isherwood, the experience of the farmer and the skill of the writer have a happy meeting. Farming has been the livelihood of the Isherwood family for six generations, and for three of those generations, the Isherwoods have been farming north-central Wisconsin's "Big Sandy." The author himself now writes, grows vegetables, and taps maple trees on the family farm in Plover, Wisconsin, near the Buena Vista Marsh.

Born on March 6, 1946, Isherwood has done a great many things besides farm. He is father of Heather and Isaac, husband to his wife Lynn and a keen observer of human nature. He has written about his experiences in *Audubon*, *Harrowsmith Country Life*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. He has read from his work on National Public Radio's "What'd'ya Know?" with Michael Feldman and on Wisconsin Public Radio's "Conversations with Jean Feraca." His first novel *The Farm West of Mars* won Robert Gard's Wisconsin Idea Foundation award for literature. His essay *Trout Killer* won the Council for Wisconsin Writers 1994 Outdoor Writing Award and appears in the collection *Harvest Moon, A Wisconsin Outdoor Anthology* published by Lost River Press, Inc. His columns appear regularly in the *Stevens Point Journal*, *Badger Commentator*, and the *Wisconsin River Valley Journal*.



"In the before dawn dark the ice-beaped hills lean against the horizon like the teeth of a rip saw, threatening the last fibers of the night...A planting morning. A day special from the rest, honored among the multitude of mornings and so the need to prepare like the bride or the priest."

THE BOOK OF PLOUGH

A farmer with an extraordinary gift for language and a writer with the field still fresh on his boots, Isherwood is irresistibly compelling. His writing is possessed by a poetry. As he moves effortlessly from the profound to the practical, he turns over the ordinary experiences of farm life with the same steady, inexhaustible pace that he ploughs the fertile underbelly of spring sod. His writing will stop you in your tracks, leaving you breathless in the wake of a fresh furrow as he carries on about his work.

Each chapter vibrates with images of farm life that elevate the everyday into a feast for your senses. Isherwood offers his own brand of discourse on:

- Sheds, the addiction of farmers.
- The abuses of French cooking and boiling field corn in hub caps over a midnight fire.
- Why farmers believe God invented the first pickup truck.
- Cures for drought, which include mowing down more hay than you can bale and leaving other valuables out for the rain.
- And, rhubarb pie, a ghastly object.

Whether you grew up on a farm or only dream about the country life, this book is for anyone who's ever had the sun in their eyes and a little dirt under their nails.

Isherwood is a regular contributor to *Audubon*, *Harrowsmith Country Life* and the *Wall Street Journal*.



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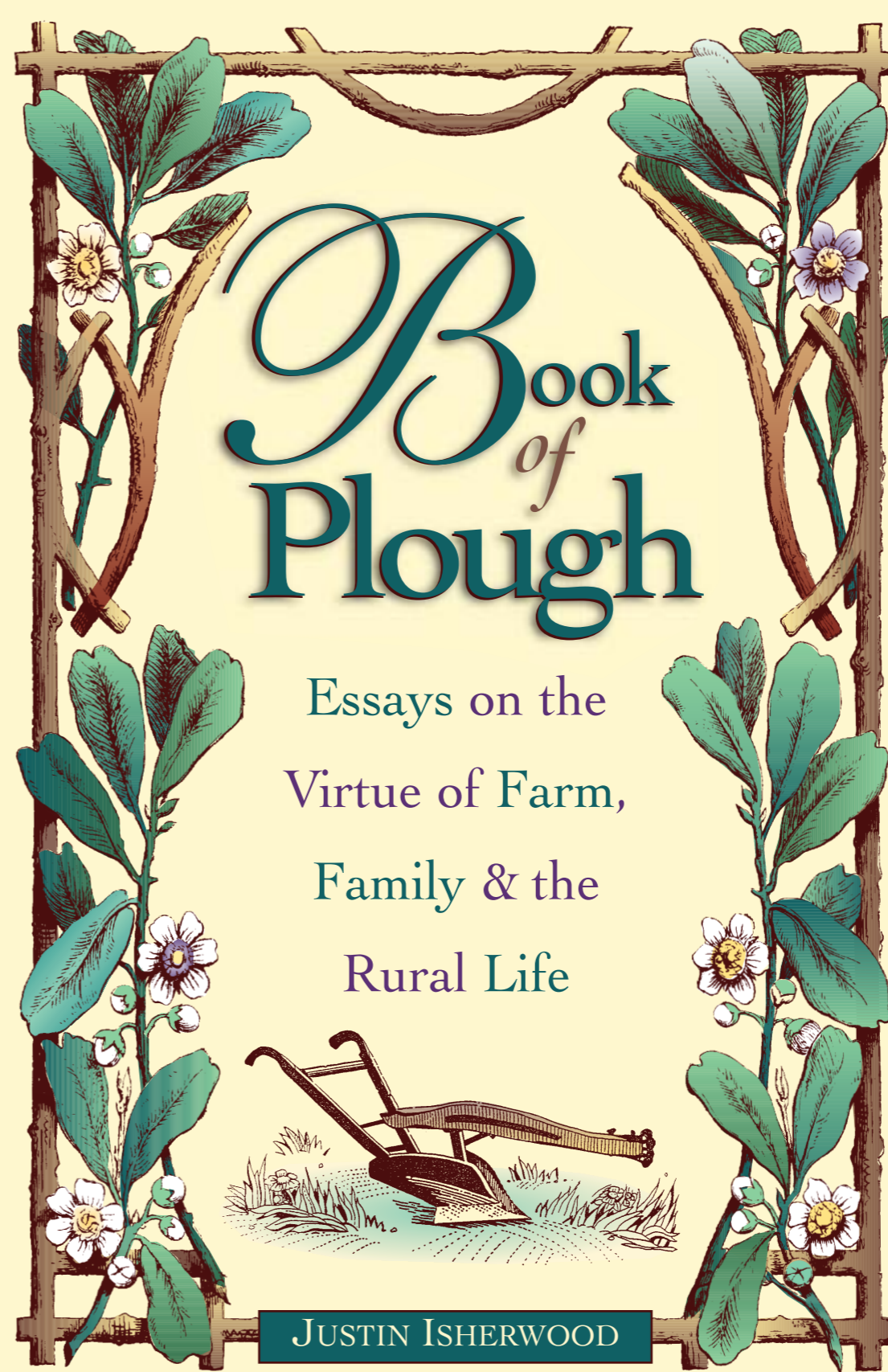
Book of Plough

Essays on the Virtue of Farm, Family and the Rural Life

ISHERWOOD



Lost River Press



*F*armers don't openly acknowledge themselves archaeologists, but they are and know they are. It comes as a consequence of fields and those who tend them and witness in person the digestion act.

So writes Wisconsin farmer and award-winning author Justin Isherwood. "Farm archeology is simple theater; no anguish, no memorials except the brow of where the fence-line was once, evidence that another tiller held the field differently."

Isherwood describes farmlife as he's known it, both in his own experience and through the generational experience of his father, grandfather, and great grandfather, all of whom earned their living on the sandy fields of central Wisconsin. The author's ear for the melody of language renders the hard, mechanical realities of farm work in accessible and lyrical prose. And along the way—past tractor history, a short dissertation on milking, and a paean to dirt roads—we're treated to Isherwood's practical philosophy of life. He is sometimes iconoclastic and irreverent, but always fresh and uncompromising.

"That God might take insult...ruins my estimate of what kind of fella God is," Isherwood writes. "Seems to me being the biggest pair of pliers this side of the Big Bang requires a high tolerance for insult."

