

# My father keeps a public house

As sung by  
Pearl Jacobs Borusky  
08-30-1940 Antigo, WI

Handwritten musical score for "My Father Keeps A Public House" in F major, common time. The score consists of three staves of music with lyrics written underneath. The lyrics are as follows:

My Father Keeps A Public House  
My fa-ther keeps a pub-lic house Down by the sea-side  
shore, And when you come to stay all night He'll meet you at the  
door.

## Verse 1.

My father keeps a public house,  
Down by the seaside shore,  
And when you come to stay all night,  
He'll meet you at the door.

## Verse 2.

I'll meet you in the morning,  
Don't let your parents know,  
My name it is young Edward Boles,  
Who plows the lowlands low.

## Verse 3.

Young Mary she lay sleeping,  
She dream'd a frightful dream.  
She dream'd she saw her true love's blood  
Come flowing in the stream.

## Verse 4.

She then arose, put on her clothes,  
Just at the break of day,  
Sing, "Father, where is that young man  
Came here last night to stay?"

## Verse 5.

"His body sleeps within the deep,  
Just where I do not know.  
I sent his body bleeding  
Into the lowlands low."

## Verse 6.

"Oh, father, cruel father,  
You shall die a public show,  
For the murder of young Edward Boles,  
Who plow'd the lowlands low."

*Transcription and lyrics from the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection.*

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## Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by Treat, no. 23, and HST

### HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

*(Edwin in the lowlands low) (Edward and Emily)*

*Sung by Mrs. Pearl Jacobs Borusky, age 39, Antigo, 1940.*

*This song was collected from the Jacobs family by Asher Treat in 1938. Pearl sang it.*

Alternate titles/related songs: “Edwin in the Lowlands Low,” “Edward and Emily,” “He Plowed the Lowlands Low.” (Note, however, that some other songs with “Lowlands” in the title, such as “The Gallant Victory of the Lowlands,” are about a ship battle, and are related to HST **Ship Set Sail for North America.**)

### Sources:

Sharp, Cecil J., collector. *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*. London: Oxford University Press, 1932. “Edwin in the Lowlands low”

Gardner, Emelyn Elizabeth, and Geraldine Jencks Chickering, collectors and editors. *Ballads and Songs of Southern Michigan*. Hatboro, Pa.: Folklore Associates, 1967. Reprinted from original, c1939. “He Plowed the Lowlands Low” text only

Treat, Asher E. “Kentucky Folksong in Northern Wisconsin.” *The Journal of American Folklore* 52, no. 203 (Jan.-Mar. 1939): 1-51.

K.G.