

**POEMS ALL THE
WAY FROM PIKE**

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Poems All the Way From Pike by Robertus Love

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ROBERTUS LOVE

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WAY FROM PIKE**

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WAY FROM PIKE

BY

ROBERTUS LOVE

"I come from old Missouri,
All the way from Pike."

ST. LOUIS
THE PAN-AMERICAN PRESS
1904

R. L.

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IN EXTENUATION

THE writer of these verses cherishes no ambition to be "damned with faint praise" as a neighborhood poet. It so happens, however, that during seven years of his formative period he was a resident of Pike County, Missouri. More than thirty years ago Mr. John Hay, now the Honorable Secretary of State, published "Pike County Ballads." The Pike of Mr. Hay's ballads lies in Illinois, across the Mississippi river from the Missouri Pike, and is noted chiefly for having given title to the book of virile ballads mentioned.

The present author puts forth the claim that Pike County, Missouri, is the most famous county in the United States, by reason of the imperishable popularity of the old "Joe Bowers" ballad, the authorship of which is a matter of dispute, though recently it has been ascribed to one John Woodward, an early vaudeville singer in California.

This ballad was first sung in a variety theater or dance hall in San Francisco, in the days of the Californian Argonauts more than half a century ago. Homely though its style be, it is compact of pathos and humor, and the story is woven into the woof and fiber of the life of Missouri and the Middle West. It is not impossible to trace the naming of the "midway" or concessions

street of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition at St. Louis —“The Pike”—to the influence of the “Joe Bowers” ballad.

Being a “Piker” himself, the author of “Poems All the Way from Pike” feels that he possesses license both poetic and proprietary to draw upon the celebrated ballad for the title of his book.

R. L.

St. Louis, May 5, 1904.

The Ballad of Joe Bowers

(Author Unidentified.)

*My name it is Joe Bowers,
And I've got a brother Ike;
I come from old Missouri,
All the way from Pike.
I'll tell you why I left there
And how I came to roam
And leave my poor old mammy
So far away from home.*

*I used to court a gal there—
Her name was Sally Black;
I axed her if she'd marry me;
She said it was a whack.
Says she to me, "Joe Bowers,
Before we hitch for life
You ought to get a little home
To keep your little wife."*

*O Sally! dearest Sally!
O Sally! For your sake
I'll go to California
And try to make a stake.
Says she to me, "Joe Bowers,
You are the man to win;
Here's a kiss to bind the bargain,"
And she hove a dozen in.*

When I got to that country
I hadn't nary red;
I had such wolfish feelings
I wished myself 'most dead;
But the thoughts of my dear Sally
Soon made those feelings git,
And whispered hopes to Bowers—
I wish I had 'em yit!

At length I went to mining,
Put in my biggest licks,
Went down upon the boulders
Just like a thousand bricks.
I worked both late and early
In rain, in sun, in snow;
I was working for my Sally—
'Twas all the same to Joe.

At length I got a letter
From my dear brother Ike:
It came from old Missouri,
All the way from Pike;
It brought to me the darn'dest news
That ever you did hear!
My heart is almost bursting,
So pray excuse this tear.

It said that Sal was false to me,
Her love for me had fled;
She'd got married to a butcher—
The butcher's hair was red;
And more than that the letter said
(It's enough to make me swear)—
That Sally had a baby,
And the baby had red hair!

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