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Miss Clara R. Brian, McLean County, Illinois

A recent acquisition of vintage quilt material included 40 newspaper clippings, with the actual full-size patterns surviving with most of them, published 1930-1933 by the *Daily Pantagraph*, Bloomington, Illinois. Many of the engravings are captioned:

Arranged for publication in The Pantagraph by Clara R. Brian, McLean County home adviser.

As I searched for her identity, I quickly discovered a very interesting lady who photographically documented the daily lives of 1920s rural Illinois women.

Clara Rebecca Brian was born October 20, 1875, Urbana, Champaign County, Illinois, daughter of Frederick Brian (1843-1926) and Margaret Almira Milligan (1850-1899). Information from a RootsWeb WorldConnect file that has since been removed.

Quoting from "Clara Brian: Home Bureau Photographs 1918-1926," Tarble Arts Center, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois:

"Clara Brian was the first Home Bureau advisor in Illinois. As she traveled to remote parts of McLean County she carried along a folding 3 x 4 camera with which she documented the women she served -- their families, homes, schools and other aspects of their lives. . . . Brian served McLean County from 1918 until 1945."

Her biographer is Margaret Esposito, *Places of Pride: The Work and Photography of Clara R. Brian* (Bloomington, IL: McLean County Historical Society, 1989).

Several websites detail her photograph collection, among them <http://www.tfaoi.org/aa/1aa/1aa114.htm> <http://www.arts.illinois.gov/artstour-roster/clara-brian-home-bureau-photographs-1918-1926> <http://www.mcleanhce.org/clarabrian.htm> as well as articles in the *Chicago Daily Herald* by Caroline Thacker, Wauconda, Illinois, July 6, 1993, "Photos Harken Back to Life in Early 1900s," and Vicki Bennington, Alton (IL) *Telegraph*, March 13, 2003, "Rural Farm Life Gets a Woman's Touch."

The quilt patterns were generally published every Saturday. The dated clippings range from September 6, 1930 (first in a series of 26), through Spring of 1933, and appear to have been published in at least three series. The September 10, 1932, clipping states:

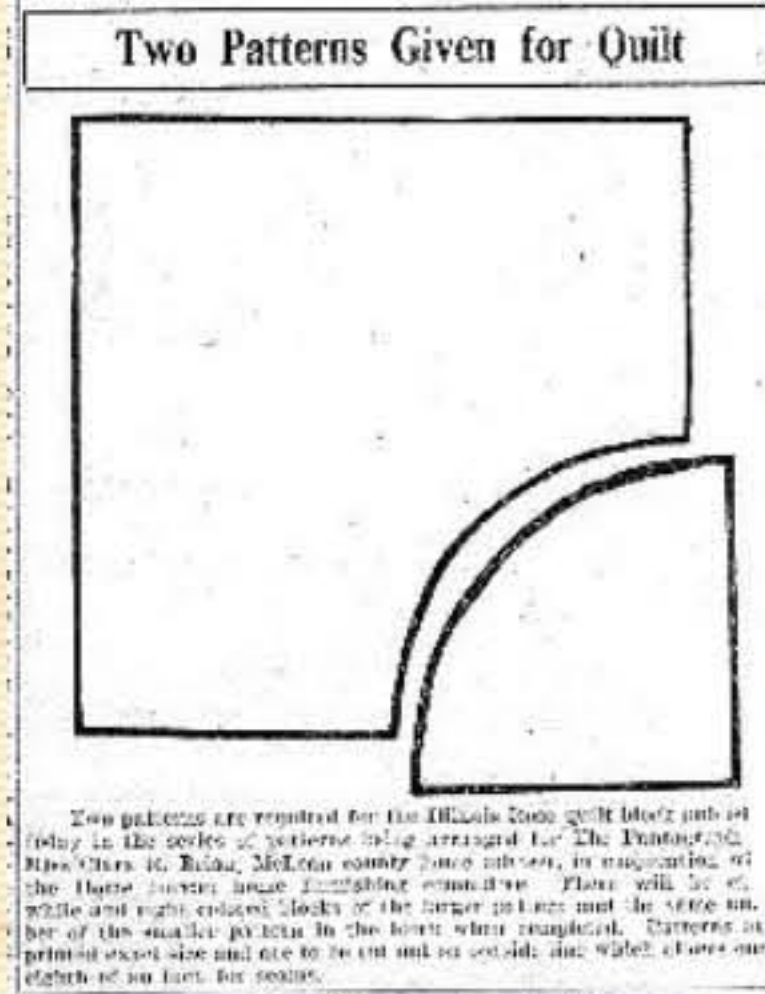
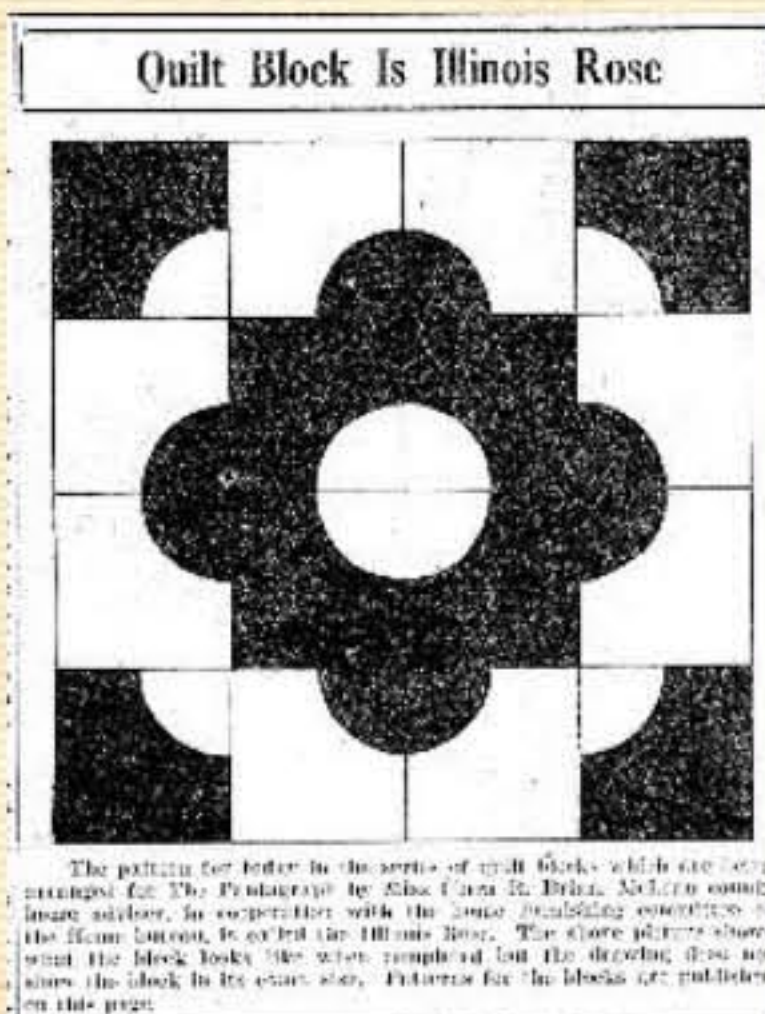
The Prosperity Star is the quilt block pattern chosen for the first of a series of hand work patterns to be offered readers of The Pantagraph on the Home and Community page for the fall and winter months. . . . Patterns will be published twice each month.

Miss Brian died July 10, 1970, Bloomington, McLean County, Illinois, at the age of 94.

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The two examples illustrated here were reduced to 40%. Many clippings are quite large -- too large for a scanner bed.

Illinois Rose, October 11, 1930



Doves at Window, December 26, 1931

