

Quilt History Tidbits -- Old & Newly Discovered

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Capper's Weekly, Wide Awake, and The Queen

Two exciting and amazing discoveries have emerged recently. The first was an original clipping acquired in September 2010 in an article titled, "In the Bay Window," which appears to be a short, short story. The text begins: "'The days of patchwork are numbered,' said Aunt Sophie, shaking her head dolefully as she neatly turned in the last round of a Jacob's Ladder, 'and they won't number as many years as I've got quilts. Young folks now-a-days sniff at the idea of sitting down and cutting up one yard of six cent calico into little bits, to make yards and yards of sewing together again.'" The story ends with Aunt Sue's comment: "'Patchwork is all right for a pastime, but when I start in to earn money, I'll hunt for something that will average up to what one good hen could do in the same time.'"

Scattered through the text are five engravings illustrating quilt designs unrelated to the story -- Swallow at the Window, Hexagon, Morning Star, Sunlight and Shadow [a Log Cabin setting], and The Queen's Favorite.

On the back are several engravings of McCall dress patterns that include Leg-o'-Mutton sleeves when they were rather extreme around 1895-1896, thus providing a rough date for the clipping. I also knew that James McCall had founded *McCall's Magazine as The Queen* about September 1873 and changed the title to *McCall's Magazine* in 1897 which further confirms the rough date provided by the Leg-o'-Mutton sleeves, and also explains the pattern named The Queen's Favorite.

Two of the engravings as well as their names stood out because I knew I had seen them elsewhere. Finally, I opened my database and searched for Queen's Favorite. Up popped the *Capper's Weekly* pattern published June 21, 1930. When I opened my *Capper's Weekly* notebook and turned to that clipping, there was Swallow at the Window on the same page that had been published a month earlier, May 24, 1930, with just one other pattern published between them. As I compared the engravings, I was struck by their similarity and remembered the story of the *Capper's Weekly* patterns that Louise Fowler Roote had published in 1971. Writing as Kate Marchbanks, she was the long time *Capper's Weekly* editor and the originator of the quilt patterns the paper had published beginning February 12, 1927.

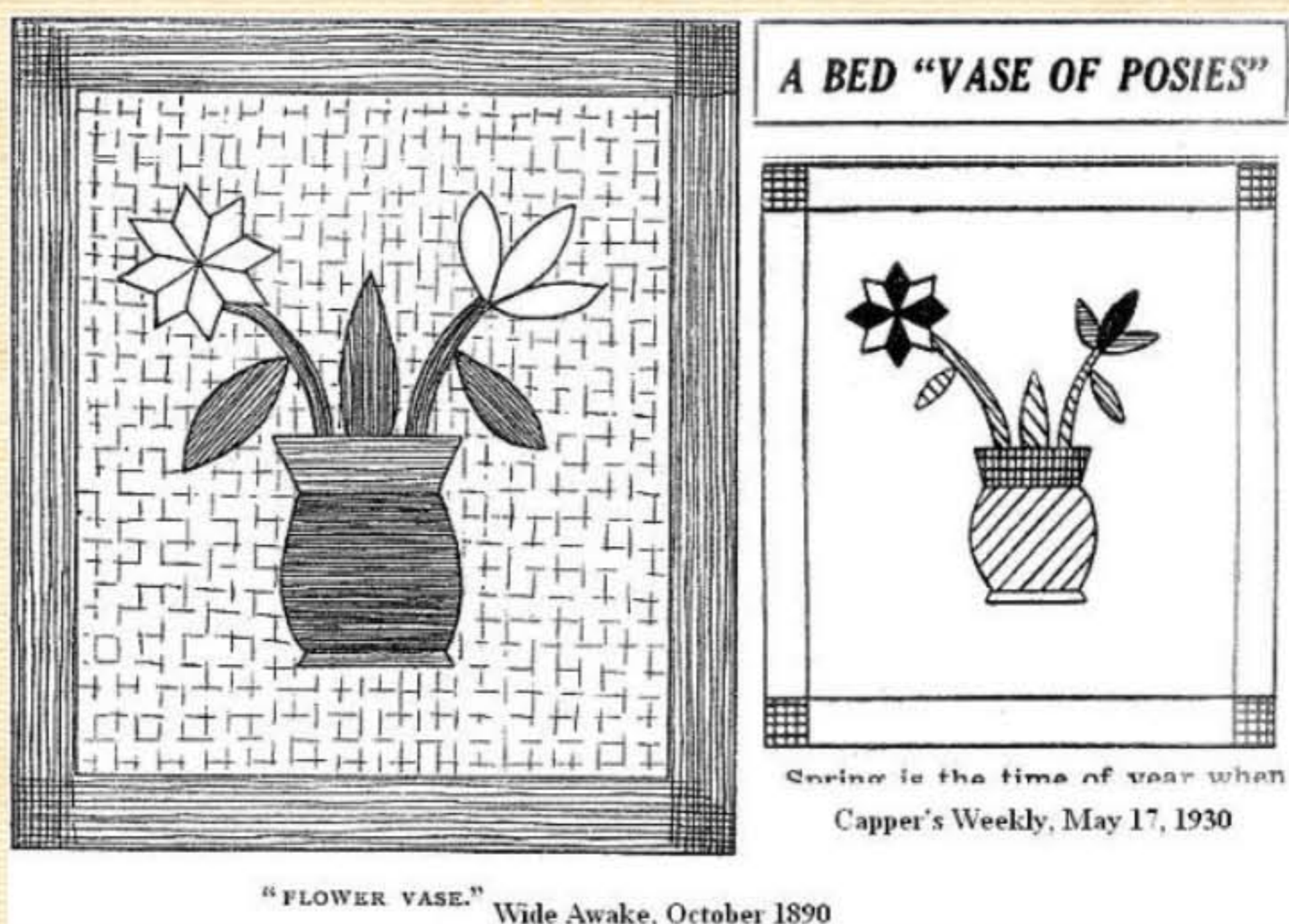
When Famous Features published *Sixteen Blue Ribbon Quilts* [Q116] in 1971 that illustrates a selection of *Capper's Weekly* patterns from 1929-1934, they published an identical book titled *Kate's Blue Ribbon Quilts* especially for *Capper's Weekly*. On the inside front cover, Mrs. Roote wrote a background article about the patterns and how they had come about. She told about "the dowry chest her mother had started housekeeping with" and how, after her death, Mrs. Roote "had packed it with her [mother's] quilting things." Assuming at the time that among those treasures was a clipping from *The Queen* like the one I had in front of me, I naturally thought it had been the source for two of her 1930 patterns which became even more apparent when the engravings were compared side-by-side as I have illustrated below.

However, was the page from *The Queen* actually Mrs. Roote's source? Or was an article from an earlier periodical the inspiration for not two but three *Capper's Weekly* designs two of which were also published in *The Queen* several years later?

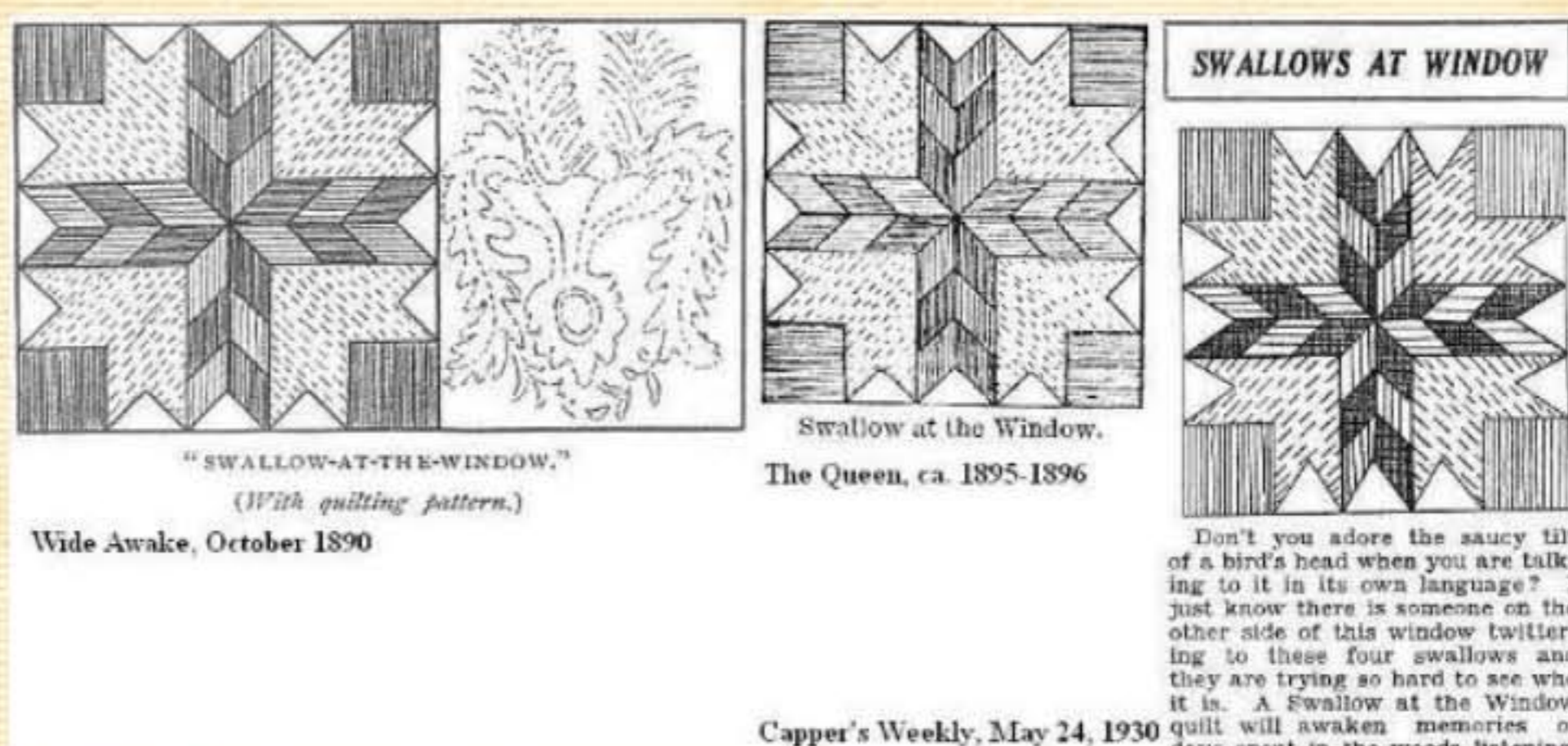
Nearly two years after my acquisition of *The Queen* article, Connie Chunn discovered the October 1890 issue of *Wide Awake*, a magazine published by D. Lothrop Company in Boston, Massachusetts (1875-1893). It includes a generously illustrated article by Kentuckian Henry Cleveland Wood (1855-1943), "A Quilt Expedition," that relates his interest in preserving old quilt designs and his visit one day with his cousin Nora to see three of her neighbor's quilts and record their designs. When Connie's photocopies arrived in my mailbox, it was quickly apparent that Mrs. Roote's source was the *Wide Awake* article and not the article from *The Queen* -- three of the *Wide Awake* engravings had been reproduced consecutively by Mrs. Roote in 1930 with only one additional design between them. Although the new photoengraving process was in its infancy in the 1890s, *The Queen* more likely purchased five engravings from *Wide Awake* to illustrate their later article, a service that some periodicals had been practicing since the 1870s which was cheaper than creating new engravings and also allowed the first periodical to recoup some of their original expense.

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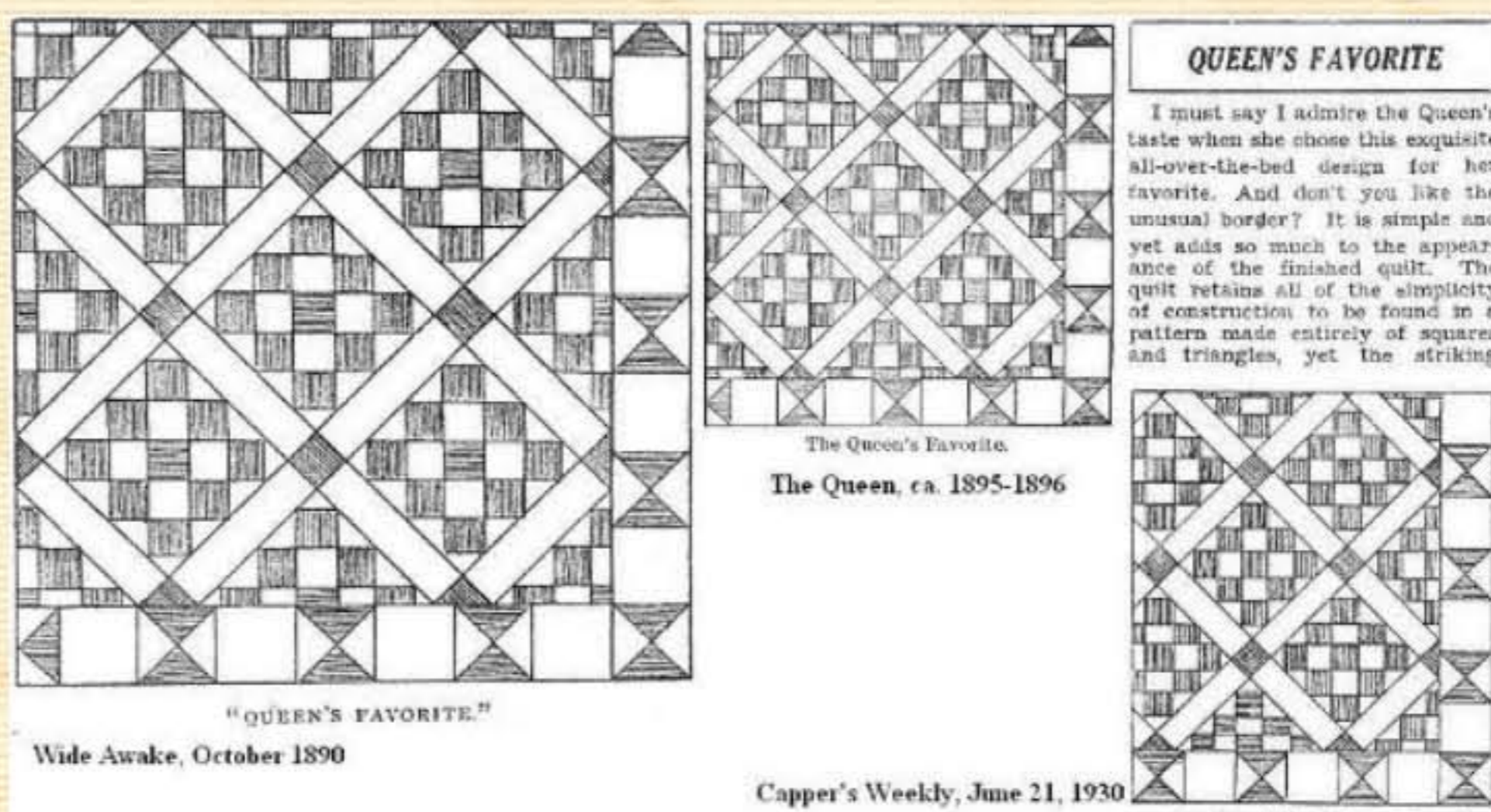
The source for Vase of Posies in *Capper's Weekly*, May 17, 1930.



The source for Swallow at the Window in *Capper's Weekly*, May 24, 1930.



The source for Queen's Favorite in *Capper's Weekly*, June 21, 1930.



Leg-o'-Mutton sleeves from the back of *The Queen* article.

