

hard to put together, but when you got up there, they was awfully heavy.

Int: I don't think I could do it!

B. P.: Well, you have to build a scaffold, you know, and you lay so many blocks up there, and you take your mortar up there and your water and you lay things out. You get enough up there for one day's work. Of course, you have to come down and get more mortar, of course, but the blocks are already there. I put them up every evening and the next morning I mixed the mortar and started in.

Int: About how long did it take you?

B. P.: I don't know. I just kept goin' until I finished it.

Int: Well, I'm sure you are proud of it! And you have lived here, let's see, 31 years? You've seen a lot of changes in 31 years.

B. P.: Yeah, in Aurora, yeah.

Int: You got Patches when he was about two. What year was that?

B. P.: By golly, I forgot. It was in the forties, I think, or the fifties.

Int: Let's see, in this story, she is 26 and she died at 29. So that would have been 1971? Did she die about 6 years ago?

B. P.: 6 or 7, yeah.

Int: So 27 from 71. That would have been 1944. Did you have her when you built the house?

B. P.: No, I got her when I was building it.

Int: That was around 1946 or so?

B. P.: Uh-huh. Somewhere in there.

Int: Did you just get her as a pet or did you really get her to ride and show?

B. P.: No, you see, I didn't have a car and I would have to go to the store and get groceries. I knew how to make those bags, you know, like paper bags, only not so big and I would put these over the back of the saddle and put the groceries on each side and bring them home. And I would go down to the icehouse down on Colfax and put 50 pounds of ice on each side and bring them home.



Int.: What did Patches think of that?

B. P.: Nothin'

Int.: It might have seemed cold. Was Patches a he or a she?

B. P.: She. Patches Rose was her name.

Int.: I have the feeling that all your pets like you.

B. P.: Do you like me? Tell her where you sleep at night. Or can you? I sleep in my bed like this, you know, and he sleeps right there.

Int.: Well, anyway, Patches was a pretty familiar character around town, wasn't she?

B. P.: Uh-huh.

Int.: This article about her was real nice.

B. P.: You ought to read some of the others.

Int.: I will. Here it says that the pair was in frequent demand for parades. So what parades did they have?

B. P.: Well, they had the Gateway to the Rockies Parades--they called them at first. And that's where I told you they had the parade at first and then they would have the pancakes-- the first of May and then when Christmas season opened.

Int.: So that's when you gave rides?

B. P.: Uh-huh.

Int.: And what did you do with the money?

B. P.: Well, I told you I give it to, oh, I can't remember her name, but she worked out there at the Chamber of Commerce and I turned it in to her to pay for that Gateway to the Rockies sign.

Int.: Well, I'm sure you helped with a lot of other things too. You helped sell poppies for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

B. P.: Oh gosh, I'm sure I sold more poppies than anybody in town. I'd get my horse with a whole bunch of poppies, and the post office was down there where the telephone company is now on Elmira and



16th. That's where the post office was. Cause it moved from over there to over here. And I'd take those poppies and I'd hit that back door. She stuck her head inside. She'd look around like that. And they would come out there. Boy they d put the money in and sure take the poppies! I'd say, "I'm not gettin' out of here until you all get over here." She'd stand there.

Int:

When you went shopping there were people all over town that would give her sugar.

B. P.:

Carrot or apple.

Int:

Now right here it says she was involved in one accident. Did someone hit her?

B. P.:

Yeah.

Int:

But she wasn't hurt?

B. P.

No.

Int.:

That was pretty lucky, wasn't it?

B. P.:

Well, it happened right up here on Colfax and Havana. I was going up Havana. I was givin' my left hand turn and I turned right in the middle of Colfax and this kid was right behind me and he ran right into me instead of turning around her. He run right into her, but it didn't hurt her.

Int:

Well for a horse that's pretty lucky. You know, it could have broken her leg or something.

B. P.:

Oh yeah. They would have had to kill her right there.

Int.:

Well, I guess all those years you were in traffic you were lucky that was the only time.

B. P.:

Well, not everybody knowed it but a horse has the right of way over all moving vehicles.

Int.:

Even today?

B. P:

Even today. It's right down there in the Capitol building where all the laws is. And way back and you'll find it still there. I did know the page, but I forgot.

Int:

Well, tell me about the time--let's see it was in 1957 when the City Council said that Patches had to go. She couldn't ride the streets anymore.

Billie Preston Interview 9/1977, city of Aurora, Aurora History Museum Collection



Aurora History Museum • 15051 E. Alameda Pkwy, Aurora, 80012 • 303-739-6660



## MUST MARE MOVE?

# Two Defy Aurora Over Horse 'Patches'

"They're just picking on me—there are other horses in Aurora besides Patches."

That's how Mrs. Bryce E. "Billey" Preston, 2391 Havana St., owner of Patches, a 16-year-old mare, stated her defiance of Aurora city officials' efforts to get the horse out of the city.

Mrs. Preston and her husband have until April 1 to remove Patches, the couple's only means of transportation. If the horse is still in town then, the city will file court action to have the mare banned from town, City Manager Earl P. Sandquist warned.

"We're standing pat," Mrs. Preston said. "Patches is entitled to stay. She was here be-

fore the city officials came," she said.

Mrs. Preston charged that the city was "picking" on her because a real estate man is trying to get his hands on her property. "I know of at least five other horses in town—four on Teoria St. and one on E. Colfax."

Patches isn't the nuisance that airplanes landing and taking off from Stapleton field are, Mrs. Preston said. "You can hear the airplanes all the time, but you don't even know Patches is here until you see her," she said.

Sandquist said Mrs. Preston's charges are "ridiculous." There have never been complaints of other horses in Aurora, he said.

## Livestock in Aurora Gets 'Eviction Notice'

Animals within the city limits of Aurora had better start looking for new homes.

"Their days inside the city are numbered," City Manager Earl P. Sandquist warned Friday.

Sandquist's warning came after a Denver Post survey Thursday turned up 40 head of cattle, two milk cows, two horses, two geese and scores of chickens in Aurora.

The survey followed charges by Mrs. Bryce E. "Billey" Preston, 2391 Havana St., that her cowpony, Patches, wasn't the only animal in the city. Aurora officials have given Mrs. Preston until April 1 to remove Patches, only means of transportation for Mrs. Preston and her husband.

Mrs. Preston's charge about other animals was only a "smokescreen," Sandquist said. "But, nevertheless, the animals are going to have to go. Our zoning regulations make no provisions for agricultural zones."

The cattle herd is being moved outside the city now, Sandquist said. "And apparently Red, Aurora's second horse, is only in town for short periods."

Sandquist would not venture an official opinion about the geese.

"They might qualify as pets if they stay indoors," he said.

## Warm Skies Due to Last Over Friday

Denver weather will stay bright and warmer until late Saturday, the U.S. weather bureau said Friday.

However, colder weather possibly some snow was cast for Saturday night.

Denver's high reading of 38.

Entered as Second Class Matter at the Post Office at Denver, Colorado under the Act of March 3, 1879

OLEN L. BELL. . . . . PUBLISHER  
EDGAR C. ARMES. . . . . EDITOR  
MARY B. BELL. . . . . SOCIETY EDITOR  
FRANK MOLINARO. . . . . CIRCULATION MANAGER

LOCAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE - 25¢ per month - \$3.00 per year

## Editorial

The subject of 'Patches' appeared on the agenda of the City Council Monday night when several letters (all urging that the horse be allowed to remain) were read by City Clerk Ray B. Johnston. At least one of the letters had some 40 signatures attached, indicating they are opposed to evicting the pet animal from the city limits. There were also some people present who addressed the council in Patches' behalf.

The basis for the action against Billy Preston, owner of Patches, appears to be a petition of 75 residents which was unavailable and a misty ordinance that was adopted in 1910 and which was quoted as containing something about public health and nuisances. A spectator at the council meeting pointed out that the Health Department recently gave the horse and its quarters a clean bill of health but the verdict remained ... the horse must go.

As the matter stands now, Billy Preston will receive, or has already received, a letter from the City Manager advising her that she must get rid of Patches by April 1. This letter was sent on the advice of the City Attorney. If the directive is not complied with, the city administration will bring suit against the owner of the animal in an attempt to force its removal. Billy Preston, through her attorney, can then present her case in the Police Magistrate's Court for a ruling in the matter.

So much for the legal aspects of the case of the city administration vs. Aurora's only horse. Now let's take a look at public opinion. To begin with this horse is a public pet and landmark of the days when horses were not only tolerated but desired. Horses are still desired in most, if not all, of the surrounding communities.

Everyone knows that Lakewood citizens love horses and there are several riding clubs within the city limits. There are many horses in exclusive Cherry Hills. There are horses by the dozens in Littleton, exclusive of the race track, and there are horses right in Denver. Less than five years ago a society matron used to alight from her surrey at Daniels and Fisher's Lawrence Street entrance to do her shopping and no traffic cop stuck a ticket on the whistle-tree.

Why one lonely old horse that minds its own business at the edge of town (if it were a few hundred feet further north it would be on an airline take-off area) should cause the city fathers so much concern in their determination to get rid of it is difficult to understand. For one thing the horse's life expectancy is probably short because it is 14 years old and not very frisky. The fact that a previous city administration ruled that Billy could keep Patches as long as it lives apparently has no bearing in the case.

It is our guess that when the ordinance was drawn up in 1910 the city councilmen who were a party to it were not thinking of a pet saddle horse on the edge of the city. If the present city council is willing to stretch a long point to include Patches as undesirable according to the terms of this old ordinance, it seems to us they could stretch a point in the opposite direction and consider that Patches is not a public nuisance.

"Two defy Aurora over horse Patches" 3/11/1957, (newspaper unknown) city of Aurora, Aurora History Museum Collection

"Livestock in Aurora gets eviction notice" 3/15/1957 (newspaper unknown) city of Aurora, Aurora History Museum Collection



Aurora History Museum • 15051 E. Alameda Pkwy, Aurora, 80012 • 303-739-6660

## OLD WEST NEVER LIKE THIS

# Neighbors Frown on Horse Woman Rides to Town

A remnant of the old West when even women rode horses to town came under fire at the Aurora council meeting Monday night as residents of Havana St. petitioned to get rid of Mrs. Bryce E. "Billy" Preston's horse, Patches.

The petition, with 13 names, asked for relief from alleged conditions around the Prestons' home at 2391 Havana St. It stated that in addition to the horse, there were five dogs, numerous pigeons and poultry.

Mrs. Preston is a familiar figure in Aurora as she rides the 9-year-old horse. She even goes to market on his back and carries her groceries home in a saddle bag.

Council accepted the petition and instructed City Manager Earl P. Sandquist to take any action necessary.

Preston denied the presence of poultry on the half-block he and his wife own and said the actual count of dogs was four, not five, "and one of them belongs to my mother-in-law." The Aurora dog catcher had reported he could find only two dogs on the property.

Preston said he planned to fight to keep the horse. He said he and Mrs. Preston bought it when it was a colt. He said he had an understanding with the city that

he could keep it as long as it lived, but could not get another.

He said the petitioners were not interested in removing the animal, but were trying to "make life miserable" so he and his wife would move out and sell their property.

In other action, council awarded the \$400,000 park bond issue passed last November to the Harris Trust & Savings Bank of Chicago. The Harris interest bid on the bonds was 2.6388, lowest of six bidders.

## Mrs. Preston To Fight Order For Patches' Patches

Mrs. Billy Preston, owner of "Patches", the controversial Aurora saddle horse, charged early this week that the city is "picking" on her because a real estate man is trying to get his hands on her property. "I know of at least five other horses in town - four on Peoria St. and one on E. Colfax," Mrs. Preston is quoted as saying.

Mrs. Preston, and her husband have until April 1, to remove Patches, their only means of transportation. If this has not been done, the city will file court action to have the horse banned from town.

The matter will be handled in the Police Magistrate's Court and there remains the possibility that Mrs. Preston, through her attorney, can win her case and have the city's order to remove the horse set aside.

Aurora (Colo.) ADVOCATE  
Thursday, March 14, 1957

## Arm Blown Off Firecracker Blast

William B. Gunther, 26, Mar Parkway, is in serious condition at Fitzsimons Army after losing part of his right arm when a homemade firecracker exploded prematurely. His right arm was blown off below the elbow.

Gunther has been making explosives as a hobby and in a piano playing act, a firecracker went off in his hand while he was making so Sunday in a field southeast of Aurora.

There is a great deal of sympathy on the side of the victim and there is nothing to prevent the judge from ruling in Mrs. Preston's favor if he feels the city is not permitting the horse to remain in the city. The city will weigh the evidence against the horse before taking action.

"Neighbors frown on horse woman rides to town" 1/17/1957 (newspaper unknown) city of Aurora, Aurora History Museum Collection

"Mrs. Preston to fight order for Patches' Patches" 3/14/1957 Aurora Advocate. city of Aurora, Aurora History Museum Collection







MRS. BRYCE PRESTON TAKES A RIDE, NOW A RARE OCCASION, ON PATCHES. The Aurora mare, now 26 years old, no longer is used on errands in the city. (Denver Post Photo by Dave Brown)

## Aurora's Celebrated Mare, 26, Living Quietly

By PEGGY KING

Denver Post Staff Writer

AURORA — Patches, the celebrated mare who has become a landmark in Aurora, recently became 26 years old.

The paint, which belongs to Mrs. Bryce (Billie) Preston, 85, of 3281 Havana St., was retired three years ago from transportation duties after a stroke and a heart attack.

She now leads a semi-secluded life in the pasture behind her owner's home, ignoring the 1929 blue station wagon that has replaced her.

Prior to her attack, Patches was almost a daily visitor to the city's business district. Whether her owner was paying a water bill, shopping for groceries or attending church services, Patches stood faithfully where she had been "perched" with the reins dropped to the ground.

The shouts of irate motorists who were thwarted from parking because the space was taken by a horse went unheeded.

Mrs. Preston — Billie — said the signs permitted one-hour parking and didn't designate by what.

### New Zealand Artist Sets Movie Program

Heather Parkison, a New Zealand artist, will show movies of her homeland at 2 p.m. next Tuesday at International House, 1600 Logan St.

The films are "Passport to Pleasure," which is about fishing, and "Amazing New Zealand," which won'ta Cates Film Festival award.

Wearing a cowboy hat, boots and blue jeans and humming a western song, Billie went about her daily business on horseback, keeping her place in traffic and signaling turns with her arms.

The horse was involved in one accident during 25 years in traffic. A nervous motorist taking his driving test with an Arapahoe County examiner hit the animal from the rear during a left turn. Patches was unhurt and one less driver's license was issued that day.

The pair was in frequent demand for parades: selling poppies for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Post 3523, and collecting toys for residents at Ridge School at Christmas time.

Attracting children like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, Billie often shared her pet with children. Before she was retired, Patches was being ridden by the second generation who had heard their parents reminisce about the famous horse.

**POPULAR ANIMAL**  
When Billie and Patches came to town, businessmen excused themselves to pet the mare, and policemen dug into their pockets for lumps of sugar.

If the horse wasn't noticed, she developed the habit of poking her head into car windows for attention. The same applied to buses which had stopped to unload passengers.

Patches became a national celebrity in 1963 when the city council issued an ultimatum that the horse had to be moved outside the city limits, because of neighbors' complaints. The area had been zoned from agricultural to residential status three years previously.

However, Billie, her husband and Patches stood firm and decided to fight the action.

The story was picked up by news services and the Prestons received letters of encouragement from throughout the country.

The case went to court and was dismissed by Municipal Judge B. L. Jordan after evidence was presented that the mare had been sheltered on the property at a time when the property was outside the city limits and the area was zoned agricultural.

The mare, who had been purchased from a U.S. marshal in Elizabeth, Colo., as a 2-year-old, came to her Havana St. home in 1948. The property covers 2½ acres and is now bounded by homes on the west and south, Stapleton Field on the north and Moorhead Memorial Park on the east.

**OTHERS BARRED**  
As long as she lives, Patches will be allowed to remain where she is. However, after her death, the Prestons may not keep another horse at that location.

At 26, the mare is slower in pace, but not in enthusiasm for watermelon. A messy melon eater, she has to have her muzzle washed after every feast to keep flies away.

Heart medicine in powdered form is added to her grain twice a day. Her 68-year-old mistress rides her now and then around the pasture, either bareback or with a loosely cinched saddle. But the excursions are becoming fewer and fewer.

"I always said when Patches was too old to ride, I'd be too old to ride her," Billie said.

"Aurora's celebrated Mare, 26, living quietly" 2/7/1960 Denver Post. city of Aurora, Aurora History Museum Collection



Aurora History Museum • 15051 E. Alameda Pkwy, Aurora, 80012 • 303-739-6660



## Council Hears Pleas Of Patches' Friends

City Clerk, Ray B. Johnston, is shown in photo reading the plea of Roselyn Smith, 12, 2208 Jamaica, to allow Billy Preston's horse, Patches, to live out the balance of its life undisturbed. Roselyn's letter to the City Council contained signatures of more than forty children and adults who feel

the same way about the horse. City Manager Earl Sandquist, left, and Councilman Jerry Garbarino are shown reading other letters from residents who are not in accord with the edict to get rid of the pet animal.

also. The panel members will be

**APRIL 1 DEADLINE**

## Pony Patches Still in Aurora

1957

Patches, famed Aurora cow pony, Monday was contentedly grazing inside the suburban city's limits and switching her tail at the city administration.

Early in February Aurora officials ordered the pony stabled outside the city limits by April 1.

Monday the battle was at a standstill. Patches was still "at home" to all visitors and the

would be determined by Leslie Gifford, city attorney.

"It is just a routine zoning violation," Sandquist said.

Gifford, however, is out of town until April 20. Richard L. Greener, assistant city attorney, said he would have to confer with Sandquist to determine the city's stand.

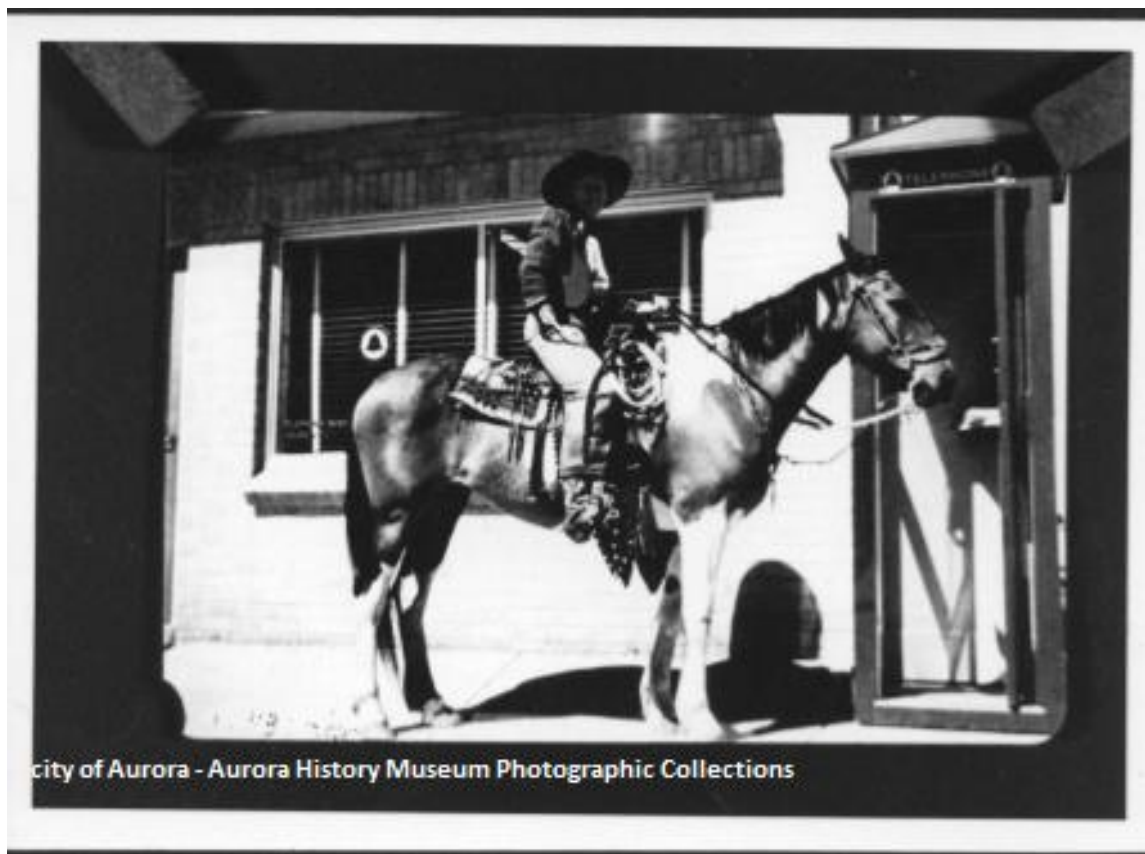
Patches 10, is the Preston's

as she lives, but he cannot keep another horse.

The hassle followed petitions by neighbors, presented to the Aurora council over a year ago, complaining about Patches and other livestock kept by the Preston's.

**Plane Lands, Takes**





*Billie Preston on Patches, 1940-1950*

city of Aurora, Aurora History Museum photography collection P1990.5466



*Children on Patches, July 1962*

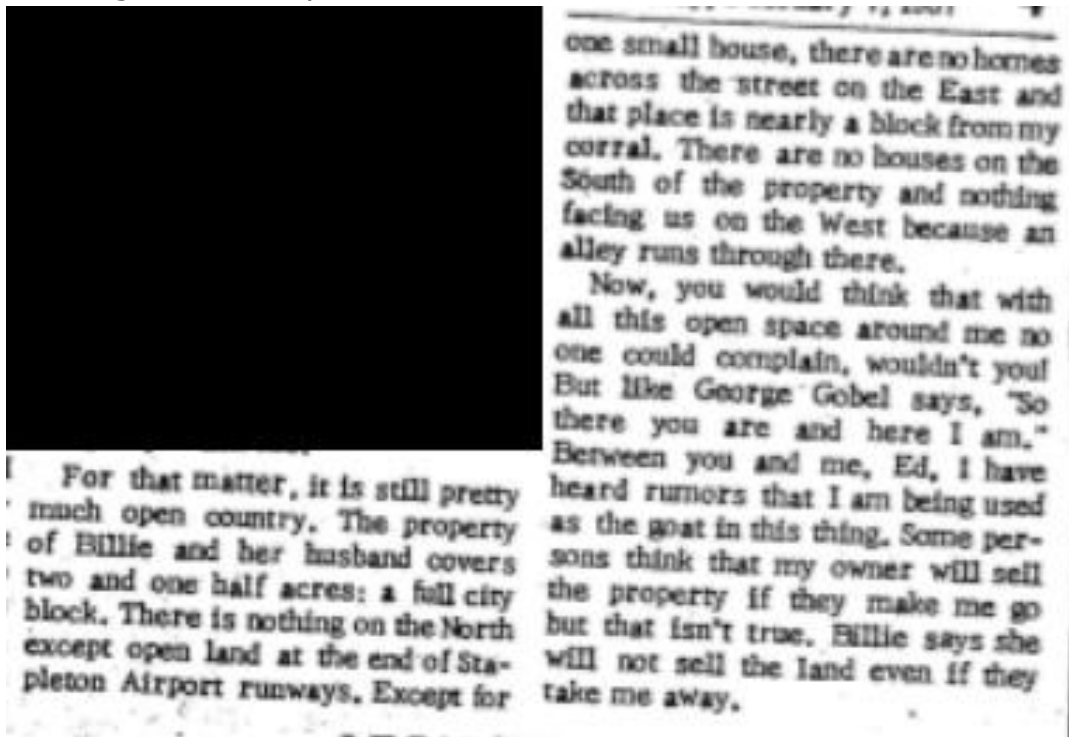
city of Aurora, Aurora History Museum photography collection P1990.15009





## Billie Preston and Patches: Assessment

The following is an except from an "interview" with Patches



Patches tells her story 2/7/1957 Aurora Advocate. city of Aurora, Aurora History Museum Collection

For that matter, it is still pretty much open country. The property of Billie and her husband covers two and one half acres: a full city block. There is nothing on the North except open land at the end of Stapleton Airport runways. Except for one small house, there are no homes across the street on the East and that place is nearly a block from my corral. There are no houses on the South of the property and nothing facing us on the West because an alley runs through there.

Now you would think that with all this open space around me no one could complain, wouldn't you! But like George Gobel says "So there you are and here I am." Between you and me, Ed, I have heard rumors that I am being used as the goat in this thing. Some persons think that my owner will sell the property if they make me go, but that isn't true. Billie says she will not sell the land even if they take me away.



Aurora History Museum • 15051 E. Alameda Pkwy, Aurora, 80012 • 303-739-6660