

The Huron River Bandit
From Pinckney Pathways

His last name was Horton and he operated around the Huron River, many years ago. His family was well known and operated a sawmill and made baskets and crates. Horton had a complex and did not get along with people.

For many years the old Peninsula dam of Dexter was a lovers' lane. There was an isthmus about a quarter mile long between the river and the tail race of the dam. This is now called Camp Newkirk and belongs to the Boy Scouts.

Horton, who was a night prowler, discovered that a number of Dexterites were having illicit love affairs there. These were his first victims and rather easy money as they did not want their affair exposed, but they were soon run out and he had to enlarge his field. Soon there were reports of people being mugged and robbed in various places. In most cases they did not see their assailant. Finally he slipped up. Walter Brass, a tall and powerful man lived about three miles from Dexter on the east river road and used to walk to town at night. Returning home one night, he had just reached the Huron River bridge when he heard someone behind him. He turned and got a blow on the shoulder, instead of the head. He grappled with his assailant who broke away, but not before he was recognized.

While a warrant was being prepared, Horton went to Judge Crane, the circuit judge and pleaded guilty. He was given a sentence in Ionia. Here he was made a fireman in the engine house, from where he made a successful break for freedom. They used dogs to track escaped prisoners then and he was nearly caught but got away by hiding in a hollow log.

The Dexter officers watched the homes of his family and relatives but he hid away in the attic of a cousin. After a week of this the cousin became alarmed and had his hired man take him away in a horse and buggy.

When they got south of Manchester, a carriage approached at a high rate of speed. Horton drew a gun and told the hired man to beat it, if it turned out to be officers in pursuit. But it was a false alarm. Horton went to Chicago and was seen several years later, employed as a sailor on the Great Lakes.