

## Infamous area art thief far from scene of crime

Myles J. Connor Jr., a former Milton resident whose name raises investigators' eyebrows following a major art theft in New England, is incarcerated in a federal prison in Chicago, and is scheduled to be sentenced April 30 for, among other things, transporting stolen paintings across state lines.

Connor, 44, pleaded guilty in November to shipping paintings by two 17th century Dutch masters that had been stolen in 1975 from the Mead Art Museum at Amherst College.

Valued at more than \$400,000, the paintings were being sent to Connor's Illinois address, allegedly to be used as a line of credit for a drug deal, Byron G. Cudmore, an assistant US attorney in Illinois, said yesterday.

Connor was first linked to art theft in 1974, when he was charged by federal authorities with heisting Andrew Wyeth paintings from a Maine estate. Connor pleaded guilty but reportedly avoided a federal prison sentence in the case by arranging the return of a stolen Rembrandt portrait to the Museum of Fine Arts.

Connor was also the focus of speculation in connection with the theft of the Charter of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which was taken in August 1984 from the State House during the day. At the time of the theft, Connor was in prison for the 1975 murder of Karen Spinney and Susan C. Webster.

The following March – and just a week after Connor was acquitted of the murders on retrial – the charter was recovered in a Dorchester apartment next to boxes of Connor's belongings, giving rise to speculation that Connor had intended to use the charter as a bargaining chip in the event of a second conviction.

"I have no doubt that Myles Connor, from a cell inside MCI-Cedar Junction, engineered the theft," Secretary of State Michael J. Connolly said at the time of the theft.

During an interview with a Globe reporter early last year, Connor said his days as the state's best-known art thief are over.

"It amazes me that my name keeps coming up," he said.

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