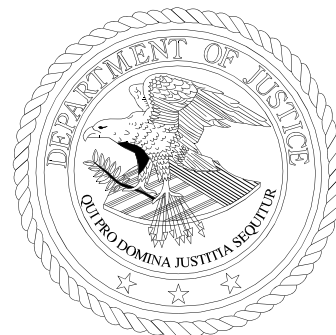


NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
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Paul J. Fishman, U.S. Attorney

More Information? Call the Assistant U.S. Attorney or other contact listed below to see if more information is available.

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Scott0315.rel
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Mar. 15, 2010

Drew University Student Arrested for
Stealing Ancient Documents from
United Methodist Archive Center

(More)

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NEWARK – An undergraduate student at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, appeared in court today in connection with his arrest for theft of ancient, historical and cultural documents from the United Methodist Archives Center located at Drew University, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

William J. Scott, 18, of Longmeadow, Mass., was arrested Sunday by Special Agents of the FBI pursuant to a federal Complaint, charging him with theft of an object of cultural heritage from a museum. At an initial appearance today before United States Magistrate Judge Madeline Cox Arleo, Scott was released on bail.

According to the Complaint, Scott, a freshman at Drew University, worked as a paid student assistant at the Archives Center since approximately October 2009. The Archives Center is home to the official archival repository for The United Methodist Church. Its collection includes records from the various denominational agencies within the United Methodist tradition, and personal papers of several bishops, denominational leaders, and missionaries from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Many of the important documents housed at the Archives Center are maintained in a secure storage room that is locked and only accessible to those who, like Scott, are given keys by the Archives Center.

Included among the papers stored in the secure storage room at the Archives Center are approximately 145 letters of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism. These letters were written in the 18th and 19th centuries and are valued on the open market at between approximately \$5,000 and \$12,000 per letter. Also included among the documents at the Archives Center are various letters written by past Presidents of the United States including Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Dwight D. Eisenhower, to various Methodist Bishops and other important Methodist figures.

“It is a sad day when a student at one of our nation’s learning institutions pilfers great cultural and historical resources, rather than respects and learns from them.” U.S. Attorney Fishman said.

According to the Complaint, on March 1, Scott sent approximately ten of the Wesley Letters that he had stolen from the Archives Center to a United Kingdom based dealer of autograph letters, historical documents and textual manuscripts. The Complaint describes that because Scott sent these important and valuable letters to the United Kingdom in an unprofessional and unprotected manner, causing two of the letters to arrive damaged, the U.K. based dealer contacted the Archives Center, the well known repository of significant Wesley Letters. As a result of this contact, the Archives Center conducted a review of their Wesley Letters and determined that between approximately 21 and 23 of the Wesley Letters had been stolen.

According to the Complaint, law enforcement executed a search warrant in Scott’s dorm room at Drew University on Saturday. Inside a drawer in a dresser located in Scott’s closet, law enforcement found a folder that contained approximately six of the Wesley Letters and

approximately eleven other historical documents that Scott had stolen from the Archives Center. Of note, according to the Complaint, law enforcement recovered the following:

Letter from John Wesley to Father Merriweather from December 1766;
Letter from President Abraham Lincoln from May 1864;
Deed signed by President Andrew Johnson from September 1865;
Letter from President William McKinley to Bishop Fowler from November 1894;
Letter from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt from June 1935;
Letter from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt from June 1945;
Letter from President Dwight D. Eisenhower from February 1953;
Letter from Madame Chiang Kai-Shek to Bishop Welch from April 1953;
Letter from Vice-President Richard Nixon to Bishop Welch from May 1953; and
Letter from Robert F. Kennedy to Bishop Welch from January 1967.

If convicted, Scott faces a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

Despite the Complaint, Scott is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt following a trial at which the defendant has all of the trial rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and federal law.

Fishman credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward, with the investigation.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew E. Beck of the U.S. Attorney Office's Commercial Crimes Unit in Newark.

- end -

Defense counsel for Scott: Deborah D. Factor, Esq., Chatham