



Suspects in custody for \$1 million copper theft scheme at Buick City

By Laura Misjak | The Flint Journal

March 11, 2010, 8:00AM

FLINT, Michigan — A close-knit group is accused of turning the former Buick City into a copper mine.

Authorities say 11 people were part of an orchestrated effort to pillage about \$1 million worth of copper, using General Motors' own equipment to steal the goods.

Genesee County Sheriff Robert Pickell said the group stole at least 152,000 pounds of copper during a three-month period last year, working in six to eight shifts at the Buick City site.

The crews would go through a fence around the complex, through the woods and past railroad tracks, said Genesee County Prosecutor David Leyton.

Someone would then crawl through a venthole in the building and open the gate for the others to enter, he said.

Much of the once-busy Buick City site is now empty since vehicle production ended there a decade ago.

After stripping copper from buildings at the site, authorities said thieves would use flat-bed railroad cars — owned and formerly used by GM — to transport the vast amounts of copper up to the fence where they would put it in trucks and take it to cash in.

"These defendants were a well-organized criminal enterprise," Pickell said.

The copper was sold to two area recycling businesses where it netted \$284,000 — a quarter of its actual value.

The two recycling businesses did nothing illegal, Pickell said.

The suspects spent the copper proceeds on Christmas gifts and vast amounts of liquor and cigarettes, Pickell said.

"There are not very many criminal enterprises operating throughout the United States that can make that much money, cash, in such a short period of time," he said.

One of the alleged ringleaders, Robert Beaucamp of Flint, worked in a scrap yard and knew the value of the copper, Pickell said.

He is believed to have entered Buick City more than 100 times and had up to seven of the defendants working for him at one point.

Flint police and the Genesee County Sheriff's Department put Buick City under surveillance last fall after a UAW official told Leyton and Pickell that he suspected someone was stripping copper at the site.

The thefts are believed to have occurred in August and September last year.

Police arrested four people at the site in October but they were released pending further investigation.

Warrants were sworn out Wednesday morning with charges related to the copper thefts for Beaucamp, 26, Terry Taylor, 37, John Warren, 36, David Davis, 33, William Moody, 45, Kara Moore, 23, Dawn Martin, 42, Dawnell Martin, 21, Daniel Martin II, 26, Marcell McKelry, 38, and Dominick Martin, 17.

McKelry is a Flushing resident. The rest of the defendants are from Flint.

The alleged ringleaders — Taylor, Moody, Daniel Martin and Beaucamp — are each charged racketeering, receiving and

concealing stolen property of \$20,000 or more, and conspiracy to commit breaking and entering and stealing property worth \$20,000 or more.

Charges for the rest range from breaking and entering to larceny in a building.

All but three had been arrested by Wednesday afternoon. Davis is in Georgia and Moore and Beaucamp were expected to turn themselves in by today.

The group is expected to be arraigned today.

Leyton and Pickell called the alleged ring a "family affair."

Officials believe Moody received \$60,000 from the stolen copper, his girlfriend Dawn Martin received more than \$95,000, and her son Daniel Martin and his girlfriend Kara Moore received \$90,000 for the thefts.

Moody and Beaucamp are believed to have hatched the idea, and Beaucamp is believed to be good friends with Daniel Martin. Dawnelle Martin is Dawn Martin's other child.

Near the end of the alleged operation, Leyton said things began to unravel as people became greedy and began conducting more of the copper stripping in smaller factions.

"There's just no honor among thieves," Pickell said. "Even though they made \$248,000, greed got the best of them."

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