

New Bedford Whaling Museum employee allegedly steals \$75,000 in museum artifacts

"A 42-year-old New Bedford man previously employed at the New Bedford Whaling Museum is facing charges for allegedly stealing dozens of artifacts from the museum.

On January 5, 2023, New Bedford Police arrested Robert M. Burchell, 42, of New Bedford, and charged him with Larceny from a Building.

Burchell was employed as a facilities associate at the museum for the past two years. It is alleged that Burchell stole dozens of pocket-sized items from the museum and sold the artifacts at local antique and pawn shops for cash. A shop owner in West Bridgewater, who bought some of the artifacts from Burchell, tipped off police to his suspicion that the items were rare and likely stolen.

The total value of the items stolen by Burchell is believed to exceed \$75,000. At the present time, most of the items have been returned to the museum. The investigation continues.

Burchell was arraigned on larceny charges in New Bedford District Court on January 6th. The court imposed a cash bail of \$5,000 and ordered Burchell to stay away from the museum and have no contact with museum employees. Burchell's next court date is January 31, 2023, for a pretrial conference.

Local pawn shops and antique dealers are advised to report any suspicious activity that could be related to this alleged crime.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Michael Scott."-Bristol County District Attorney's Office.