Catonsville man, 27, pleads guilty to fraud counts related to mail thefts

By MICHAEL JAMES
SUN STAFF.

A Catonsville man pleaded guilty yesterday to his part in a scheme to swindle tens of thousands of dollars from unsuspecting Baltimore-area residents whose credit card checks and personal data were stolen from mailboxes and postal delivery vehicles.

Christopher X. Gibson, 27, admitted in U.S. District Court in Baltimore that he and an alleged accomplice, Mark Gregory Young, stole mail from the postal vehicles. Six postal trucks were broken into, primarily while parked in Roland Park and Mount Washington in the city and Rodgers Forge and Towson in Baltimore County, court papers showed.

Young, 47, who has convictions in South Carolina for credit card and identity fraud, is awaiting trial on the federal charges.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Bonnie S. Greenberg said in a statement of facts presented in court yesterday that two men were responsible for more than $47,000 in mail thefts. The men also took mail directly from residential mailboxes, court papers said.

At the time of his arrest last year, Young had 190 letters that were addressed to others — mostly residents of affluent neighborhoods, authorities said. Some letters taken in the scheme contained credit card access checks that were used illegally to make cash withdrawals on the credit accounts, prosecutors said.

Other letters contained credit card account numbers and personal data that could allow access to a line of credit, documents said.

"The potential loss based on the available credit limit [was] approximately $878,000," said the statement of facts entered in Gibson's plea agreement.

Young also is charged with possession of "document-making implements" that prosecutors said he intended to use for the production of false identification, including U.S. Postal Service, Civil Service and Social Security templates.

Sun 2/1/98