

Glass company to set up shop in Watsonville

Building to become manufacturing plant

By BOB SMITH

STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — AnnieGlass Inc., makers of art and dining glassware, is expanding its operations by moving into Watsonville, city and company officials said today.

The Santa Cruz-based company has purchased the old Seventh-Day Adventist building at the corner of Harvest and Riverside drives, said Richard Koch of the Economic Development Department.

When renovations and changes are completed in three to four months, the company plans to consolidate three of its four Santa Cruz locations into the new Watsonville facility.

AnnieGlass will use the facility to manufacture high-end glass products for more than 800 customers worldwide, including gift stores, art galleries, specialty stores and department stores such as Nieman Marcus, Gumps and Marshall Fields.

The 16,000 square-foot building will allow the firm to expand production of its existing lines and begin the manufacturing processes for new lines.

The company will keep its exist-

ing retail store on Cooper Street in Santa Cruz and will open a factory outlet store in the Watsonville building.

AnnieGlass is owned by Annie Morhauser and has expanded every year of its 15 years in business.

AnnieGlass General Manager Chuck Walbridge said that the company now employs about 30 people. The work force will be expanded by about 20 percent — five to six people — for the short term, Walbridge said.

"We manufacture high-end dinnerware from slumped glass," Walbridge said. The company buys glass and then shapes and decorates it into dinnerware. The final step is to heat the glass to its melting point — where it slumps into its distinctive shapes, Walbridge said.

The company started 15 years ago as a small studio in the Sash Mill building on Potrero Street in Santa Cruz, and has steadily expanded its operations until there was no more space available at that location, Walbridge said.

He expects operations to move to Watsonville by December.

This is second art manufacturing firm to locate in Watsonville this year, Koch said. The first was Hi-Lite Candles.