Kurt Ellison

Cemetery workers Jay Bradley, left, and Steve Resetar check damage to grave markers.

Vandals destroy a bit of history

An estimated $7,500 damage was inflicted on monuments at Pioneer Cemetery in Watsonville over the weekend, and a reward will be offered to find the culprits.

Everett Dias, manager of the Pajaro Valley Public Cemetery District, said that whoever did the damage wiped out a part of Watsonville's history.

"Markers that were over 100 years old were broken," he said. "They were works of art. We're disgusted and we're hurt. They were great monuments and mementos of old-time Watsonville families from which there are no more descendants. It was the history of the valley they desecrated."

Dias said he wanted to publicize the vandalism to "alert the residents" as to just what happened. The cemetery board will meet tomorrow to determine the amount of the reward.

A jogger reported the damage Sunday morning, and said everything had looked normal the morning before. Several stones of marble, which is softer than other kinds and shatters easily, had been chipped and broken. Other monuments had been turned over.

"Some can be patched together, but they'll never return to their original form," Dias said.