

Watsonville paper's new owner lays off four long-time workers

By **DONNA KIMURA**

Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — The Watsonville Register-Pajaronian, which was bought a last Friday by the News Media Corp., fired several longtime staff members Wednesday.

Several employees confirmed that a photographer, two editors and the circulation manager were among those released.

The move came after staff members were told last week they are considered "temporary" employees.

They had been told to continue

to report to work as usual until further notice.

Two workers said the remaining employees were offered the same pay and benefits as they received under the prior owner, Scripps Howard.

News Media Corp. of Rochelle, Ill., announced Friday that it had taken over the afternoon paper, which has provided news to Watsonville for the past 127 years.

On Monday, newsroom employees met individually with a company representative, who asked them about their role at the paper. He also asked reporters if they owned

a 35mm camera and whether they could develop film.

Mike Rand, controller for the corporation, did not return a telephone call Wednesday.

"When I heard they were sold, it didn't surprise me," said Watsonville City Councilman Oscar Rios, a regular reader of the paper. "I heard in the past they were having problems."

Rios called on the new owners to reflect on its pages a community that includes Latinos, Asians and African-Americans.

Sentinel staff writer Marianne Biasotti contributed to this story.