



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Ward Garrett removes spray-painted graffiti from bricks with the rig.

Firm aims to clean up on graffiti

By **JASON SCHULTZ**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — A Watsonville manufacturing company has found a cheap, quick and environmentally friendly way to remove graffiti.

Using an attachment to a power washer, the company, Walters Manufacturing Co., thinks it's found the answer to the struggle many cities face removing spray-paint tagging.

Ward Garrett, sales representative for Walters Manufacturing, which has been selling power washers and manufacturing industrial cleaning supplies in Watsonville since 1975, said about four months ago the company started selling the power washer attachment, made by a Texas company.

The attachment mixes industrial strength baking soda into the high-pressure stream of water, which takes spray-painted graffiti off an unpainted cement, wood or metal surface in a snap.

Painted surfaces can be cleaned with a weaker mixture of the bak-

Walters Manufacturing

WHAT: Manufacturer of industrial cleaning equipment.

WHERE: 5B Hangar Way, Watsonville.

EMPLOYEES: 12.

FOUNDER: Walter Malsbary; son, Donald Malsbary, chief engineer and general manager.

INFORMATION: 724-1377.

ing soda without damaging the surface below, Garrett said, but it will take longer to remove.

The baking soda is nontoxic and biodegradable. He said this option is much better than the traditional graffiti remedy of sandblasting, which is expensive, can be harmful to the surface being cleaned, and can bounce back and harm the person using the sandblaster.

So far, Garrett said, Walters Manufacturing has sold its baking soda blasters to Watsonville, Santa Cruz and Greenfield. Santa Cruz County's volunteer graffiti abate-

ment program has expressed interest in buying one, as have a number of other San Francisco Bay Area cities, Garrett said. The company set up Watsonville with a power washer and attachment plus a large pallet of the baking soda for \$3,000.

"It's a beautiful piece of machinery, let me tell you," said Rex Rackley, the full-time graffiti abatement officer for Watsonville. "It flat out will take the tag off."

Rackley said he has used the machine more than 24 times in the two months the city has had it. He said he only has had to go over most fresh tags once or twice with the machine to remove all traces. Before, he said, it would take all day to scrub paint off with a wire brush or to sandblast.

"It's huge in saving time," Rackley said. The machine works so fast, Rackley said, he's has caught up to the point that he can clean up most new graffiti within 48 hours of it being reported.

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