

Graffiti Removal

By Trail End State Historic Site Superintendent Cynde Georgen; from *Trail End Notes*, May 2005

In January 2005, several young “gentlemen” set out to make their mark in Sheridan. Unfortunately, they decided to do it with a spray can. The result was over \$4,000 worth of graffiti damage to the exterior of the Kendrick Mansion.

Fortunately, through the efforts of Trail End staff and professional consultants, the offensive (and vulgar) graffiti has now been removed and the Mansion is looking much more herself.



Trail End Graffiti, 2005 (TESHS Collection)

In April, Courtney Murdock, Project Testing Coordinator for Masonry Stabilization Services Corporation of Lawrence, Kansas, came to Trail End to test the properties of the spray paint used on the building (not only do different paints have differing removal techniques, different surfaces absorb the paint's pigment differently!). Wearing gloves and safety goggles, Courtney spent two days testing a variety of products on the brick and limestone surfaces, hoping to find the most appropriate product for removing the bright orange “tags,” taunts and obscenities from the building. By the time she finished, Courtney had identified a multi-step process - using three different products, a power washer and lots of time - that looked like it would remove almost all of the paint.

In early May, Trail End staffers Rod Adams and Nancy McClure followed Courtney's recommendations and began work on the graffiti removal. Step one of the process called for the application of a thick paste-like stripper that had to be covered with a protective paper film and left on for twenty four hours.

The next day, the paper was removed and the remaining stripper scraped off. Following a good rinse with the power washer, an “after wash” was brushed on which essentially neutralized the stripper. Three minutes later, that product was also washed off. At that point, things did not

look too good, as quite a bit of the paint still remained, especially on the limestone columns. But, assured by the results of Courtney’s testing, Rod and Nancy did not give up hope.

In the next step, a “fast acting” paste was applied and allowed to dwell on the masonry for twenty minutes, all the time being agitated with a stiff bristle brush. Following a final rinse with the power washer, it quickly became apparent that the process worked: The graffiti was gone!

We hope we never get tagged again, but if we do, it’s a relief to know that the research has been done and all we have to do is follow the Courtney-approved procedures.



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