

Markham Museum

Jill-of-all-trades

By PAUL PIVATO
Working at the Markham Museum involves a bit of brawn and a bit of historical acumen, says 19-year-old Valerie Ceballo.

Sometimes it even involves a dose of illusion.

When she isn't seeding bald patches of earth or stripping old paint, Valerie is busy designing pine box conduits to hide electrical wires running along the outside of a log cabin.

"It has to look authentic," she explains. "We try not to use materials that weren't around a hundred years ago."

Thus, museum workers use wood whenever possible — filling holes with wooden plugs instead of putty, for instance — and using brass instead of stainless steel.

The University of Waterloo arts student spends most of the work-

ing day inside a large work shed, sawing and hammering under a black-and-white poster of the Three Stooges staring at a blow torch.

Now in her second summer of work at the Main Street museum, Valerie has done everything from woodworking to gardening.

"I'm learning a lot about history," she says. "I never realized what an interesting town Markham was and how hard people worked."

But, she added, a lot of people in Markham don't even know there's a museum in their own backyard.

The Museum presently has 15 buildings up to 150 years old located on the grounds as well as an antique luxury passenger train.

With a heritage museum such as Markham's there's a danger of

romanticizing the past, says Valerie.

"It looks so quaint," she says. "But then you see that the early settlers had many hardships."

Valerie mentions the Maxwell log cabin, noting that many visitors find it hard to believe a family could have lived in such a small dwelling.

Until she goes back to school in early September, Valerie will continue doing odd maintenance jobs — jobs such as spreading loam and hiding electrical wires.

Because, admits Valerie, camouflaging electrical sockets can be just as important as restoring an old brass chamber pot.

Valerie is employed through Summer Experience '86, a work experience program co-ordinated by the Ontario Ministry of Skills Development.

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