



In his book *New Rooms for Old Houses* (The Taunton Press, 2007), architect Frank Shirley chronicles the restorative transformations of several classic examples of period architecture. One project, an 1880s shingle-style beauty, was rescued by a massive restoration that brought the home to a place possibly better than it ever had been.

The centerpiece of the house is a new grand entry hall and sweeping staircase. Based on interiors of a San Francisco Victorian that the homeowners had seen in a book, the stair design was brought to life by Shirley and Charron Construction of Danvers, Mass. In turn, Shirley hired woodworker Phillip Lowe to fabricate the newels, railing, and balusters.

Lowe's preparation included a trip to San Francisco to measure the original staircase. Built primarily of white oak, the staircase includes burl-paneled newel posts and a curved railing that terminates in a sphere covered with carved acanthus leaves. One of the trickier stages of construction was shaping the ball; the railing easement and ball had to be a single piece of wood. Lowe began by carefully turning the bottom half of the ball blank on his lathe and carved the remainder by hand.



—Finish photos by Randy O'Rourke;
shop photo by Phillip Lowe.

Re-creating a masterpiece