

Even in their most basic form, staircases are highly complex creations. Whether or not they spiral and have railings, spindles, landings, turns and present amazing views inside or out, staircase architecture can intimidate the best of woodworkers. However, getting it right is critical. The central positioning of a beautiful staircase is typically the focal point in a home's design, often providing the WOW factor demanded by today's savvy homebuyers in search of quality and value.



**PRIDE WALKS THE FLOORS** of Shipway Quality Stairs and Railings. It is obvious on the faces and in the voices of those who work there. It shows in the extreme cleanliness of the workshop and in the constant buzz and hum of the various saws and rotors and such. Most of all, however, pride lights up the smiles of Larry and Dale Shipway when they recount the past, and imagine the future, of their company.

From its modest beginnings in a countryside barn in Millgrove, to its present Burlington location in a 100,000 square foot manufacturing facility on Ironstone Drive, Shipway Quality Stairs and Railing Systems is ramping up to celebrate its 35th year of operations.

The company has evolved over those 35 years to become Ontario's most established staircase and railing manufacturer. It has doubled in physical size an astounding seven times and currently provides employment to a workforce that totals 120. Together these talented, dedicated individuals provide Shipway with the capacity to supply stair and rail systems to a staggering 10,000 homes annually. Using a formula that has been honed to perfection since 1980, Shipway has earned its enviable reputation as the supplier of choice to most, if not all, Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area (GTHA) subdivision homebuilders.

From the very beginning brothers Larry and Dale Shipway, and brother-in-law Carm Morris (now retired), each focussed on one thing only – doing whatever was necessary to keep their business viable. Enduring successive recessions over the past four decades underscored that becoming comfortable and complacent will never work when one is competing for business in the construction sector.

Understanding that tough economic times can lie just around the corner, growth of the company has been carefully and strategically planned. Stable growth could not have occurred without the company being ever mindful of costs. Product construction is reviewed constantly to reduce waste and increase efficiencies. The people and technologies in which the Shipways invest produce the best possible product at a price that is competitive and affordable.



*Burlington's Shipway Brothers, Larry and Dale*

Understanding, too, that one's continued success in the construction industry is dependent on trust and loyalty, Larry and Dale attach tremendous value to the relationships they have developed during their many years in business.

Dedication to the customer begins as soon as the contract is awarded commencing with Shipway's engineering team, through to manufacturing and quality control, and finally to installation and on-site service. Commitment to the customer does not rest until the customer is completely satisfied.

Equally important are the staunch relationships the Shipways have historically worked hard to cultivate with prominent area builders – builders which include the prestigious Branthaven, Mattamy and Losani Homes. Many of the builders with which Shipway has proudly partnered also cut their teeth during the 1980s and today, as at Shipway itself, their children are emerging as the exciting next generation of business owners on the vibrant GTHA residential construction scene.

The **Shipway Formula for Success** translates to never losing sight of the industry trends most desired by customers, and making products affordable without sacrificing quality or service, start to finish. The formula includes keeping the company lean and efficient so it can navigate through the upswings and downturns of the construction industry. Lastly, remaining front-of-mind to the best of the GTHA builders very often means rolling up one's own sleeves and doing whatever it takes to protect and preserve the company's hard earned reputation.

- Louise K. Anger, MNP LLP