



Photo by Rick Keating

David Pippenger's house on Duncan Island, near Mapleton, was designed by Eugene architect Willard C. Dixon with a "split personality" — a high-pitched shed roof and minimal posts for preserving views and daylighting on the modern-looking south side (pictured), and a more traditional-looking farmhouse facade on the north side.

Indoor-outdoor dream on island in the stream

Light- and sight-filled custom home draws on the magic of an idyllic site surrounded by the Siuslaw River

By Joel Gorthy
THE REGISTER-GUARD

From the couch in the living room of David Pippenger's home near Mapleton, it's hard to decide where to rest your eyes.

Starting to the left, you could let them ascend the dramatic open staircase, a sculptural melding of floating wooden steps and steel cables that sets the stage for the rest of the artful, airy interior.

Just to the right of the stairs, your eyes could scan the impressive mass of the Tulikivi fireplace — 10,000 pounds of soapstone imported from Finland and hand-assembled here — that is the ultra-efficient heat source at the heart of this ultra-custom home.

Straight ahead, you could stare in wonder at magnificent moving images on a curved LG TV screen that "floats" on a wall of rustic wood.

"Sometimes I just sit here and go around the world," Pippenger marvels, captivated by a slow-motion flyover of Hong Kong's skyline that serves as an Apple TV screensaver along with other scenes from around the globe. "That's an OLED (organic light-emitting diode) screen, so as far as the pixels, that's the best screen you can get. I mean, you can just jump into that image!"

Impressive as all those sights from the couch are, they pale against the striking landscape mural that takes up the entire wall to the right. A verdant Coast

Range forested slope in the background dips to a meandering Siuslaw River estuary, waterfowl plying a reedy, sun-dappled marsh in the foreground.

But wait! That's not a mural! It's one massive sliding-glass door! And it's open!

A location to love

A gentle coastal breeze courses through the home this bright summer morning, taming what will be an almost triple-digit day.

"Everything about the place was designed so that the outdoors and the indoors were not far apart," says Pippenger, an advertising agency owner who employed Eugene architect Willard C. Dixon, AIA to create his new home. "Everything is supposed to be open, airy, inviting."

It all begins with an incomparably scenic and secluded site on Duncan Island, roughly halfway between Florence and Mapleton. Pippenger, 62, originally purchased land here to operate the Whiskey Creek Organics farm with his son.

He then bought more adjacent property — for a total of 120 acres comprising the east end of the island — situated between the main river channel

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and the connected estuary. The additional land included a unique 20-year-old custom home of Port Orford cedar, along with a bunkhouse, stables and more. Pippenger moved into the home in 2010.

But one night in July 2015, the house went up in flames. It seems that a burning briquette had dropped from a barbecue-grill starter and then smoldered on the deck before starting a fire that spread to the house.

"I woke up to glass breaking and smoke alarms going off," Pippenger says. "I got out with a pair of boxers, my glasses and my phone, and that was it."

Of course, he still clung to one other prized possession.

"I'm kind of addicted to this location," he admits, noting the natural bounty that once allowed him to reel in a 30-pound salmon from his boat dock, and that resulted in one of his farm workers killing three birds with two shots while duck hunting.

"This land has such amazing history with Indians and settlers," Pippenger says, describing the marshes on his property as important native American

bird-hunting grounds. A schoolhouse dating to 1900 once stood nearby, too, he says. "It's just a really special place."

When Dixon came out and stood amongst the ashes of the old house, Pippenger says, "he just kind of 'got' the property. To me it shows."

Farmhouse, meet Frank Lloyd Wright

Pippenger gave Dixon a few requirements for the home design, which he hoped would blend historic farmhouse and contemporary elements. The avid cook wanted a gourmet kitchen and



Homeowner David Pippenger.



Roll-up glass door opens to connect this covered outdoor kitchen and seating area to the indoor dining area. When the door is closed, a portal allows access to the firewood bin, at center, for fueling the Tulikivi masonry fireplace, seen from either side in above and below photos.



Pippenger says "everything about the place was designed so that the outdoors and the indoors were not far apart." Here, open glass doors wash the central living spaces in light and coastal breezes.

outdoor kitchen; that Tulikivi fireplace at the center of the home; a deck big enough for entertaining a party of 50; unobstructed views of surrounding nature; and a four-sided covered porch, “because nobody does that anymore.”

Dixon describes his resulting 2,500-square-foot home design (which also includes 2,100 square feet of outdoor living area) as “a traditional farmhouse with a modern twist.”

On the north side, facing the main river channel, the home resembles an old two-story farmhouse, with horizontal siding, staid white porch posts and all.

To the south, the exterior erupts in dynamic design. A high shed roof pitches up and out over expansive windows and a two-story, roll-up garage-style glass door for maximum daylighting and ventilation.

Vertically oriented metal siding contrasts with horizontal siding painted in Pippenger’s custom “black red” hue, which is distinct from typical rusty reds.

And most of the home’s outdoor living area is on this side. A covered deck, veranda and balcony put Pippenger and guests almost at one with the nearby estuary marshes. Cantilevered construction preserves unobstructed views, without the posts of the opposite facade.

“So that’s the farmhouse side, this is the Frank Lloyd Wright side. It’s like me; it has a split personality,” Pippenger jokes.

As Ken Carter of Carter Brothers Construction, the builder, commented to Pippenger, “this is a very unique house, but everything is functional.”

Other highlights include a chef’s dream kitchen with commercial range/hood, island with butcher block, oversized refrigerator, pantry and two dishwashers; barn-style sliding doors and dining table crafted on-site by the homebuilders; efficient LED lighting; bamboo flooring; 10-foot room ceilings; and an industrial-sized central overhead fan to help with ventilation and heating/cooling.

Some things are not as apparent, such as the tiny tucked-away studio where Pippenger can record voiceovers for advertising clients, or the fiber-optic internet connection, or the fortified structure that includes 2-by-6-inch framing lumber and 30 earthquake foundation straps.

Eyes can’t help but land on the half-dozen small, different-shaped windows set into the west wall of the upstairs master bedroom. Dixon added this so-called “Corbu wall” — inspired by a 1950s French chapel design by modern architecture pioneer Le Corbusier — as a form of “art built right into the home.” He says it creates “a whimsical, sculptural play with natural light — almost celestial.”

And the effect is right at home, here on this island where form meets function, where tradition greets innovation, where the indoors invites the outdoors to dance.

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Clockwise from left: Open area beneath the south-facing shed roof features an industrial-size overhead fan and garage-style glass roll-up door; the upscale chef’s kitchen has commercial-grade appliances; exterior perspective shows juxtaposition of home’s distinct traditional and modern sides.



In the master bedroom, main windows let in the beauty of estuary marshes while a wall of small, mismatched windows add more light and interest.

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