



Timeline of the Cathlapotle Site & Plankhouse Project

- App. 450 years ago** The present site of Cathlapotle was first settled by Chinookan people. During peak times, Cathlapotle's 14 plankhouses were occupied by an estimated 900 people. Cathlapotle was one of the largest settlements on the lower Columbia, its strategic location at the confluence of several waterways enabled the inhabitants to gather resources and conduct trade up and down the river.
- October 1792** First documented European presence in area, William Broughton of Vancouver Expedition noted a "large Indian village," which is today considered to be Cathlapotle.
- November 5th, 1805** Lewis and Clark described the "Quathlapotle Nation" and noted that seven canoes from that village accompanied them a few miles down the river.
- March 29, 1806** Lewis and Clark visited Cathlapotle, trading with the Cathlapotle people for several hours. They camped nearby at a place now called Wapato Portage, near present day Carty Lake.
- 1820's - 1830's** "White man diseases" such as small pox and malaria took a toll on native populations and Cathlapotle was eventually abandoned.
- 1825** Fort Vancouver, the first Euro-American trading settlement in the Northwest, was established by the Hudson Bay Company and served as a center for fur trade and other commerce. The Cathlapotle people and other native people of the Columbia River were frequent visitors to the fort.
- 1839 or 1840** The Carty Family claimed the land upon which Cathlapotle and the Wapato Portage site are situated. The family used the land for farming, cattle grazing, hunting, fishing, and logging. They also built a homestead in the vicinity of the present day Plankhouse. The Cathlapotle archaeological site was left untouched until the early 1990's.
- 1966** The Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge was established, the Carty homestead became the first unit of the Refuge. The Archeological site of Cathlapotle was protected as part of the refuge.

- 1990's** Portland state archaeologists, in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Chinook tribe initiated a project to find, excavate, and study the Cathlapotle Archaeological site.
- Spring-Summer 2002** A group of FWS staff, archaeologists, tribal members and community partners began meeting to discuss the feasibility, cost, and potential location of building a full-scale plankhouse for the purpose of interpreting the natural and cultural history of the Refuge.. The project was identified as one of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Committee of Vancouver/ Clark County's Legacy Projects, and fundraising efforts were initiated under the auspices of LCBCVCC's.
- Fall 2002** Architectural plans for the Plankhouse were developed, incorporating archaeological and ethnographic data, as well as input from the tribe and FWS accessibility/safety personnel. This ensured a structure that was not only culturally authentic but also safe and long lasting. The conceptual plans were unveiled during the Kick-Off Event at the Refuge in September. A Hearth lighting ceremony was held in October.
- Winter 2003** Partners' fundraising efforts continued. A series of hands-on workshops were initiated with two primary goals 1) to produce an inventory of the tools and building materials necessary to construct the plankhouse, and 2) to provide the community with hands-on experiences in a broad range of topics introducing them to the rich cultural heritage of the area.
- Spring-Fall 2003** The Plankhouse construction site was prepared during summer 2003. Throughout the summer, volunteers sought out donations of at least 115 cedar trees of various dimensions and lengths. Those logs, destined to become planks, posts, and beams were than prepared by volunteers during regular work parties using both traditional and modern methods. Some logs were set aside as structural elements to be carved in the Chinookan style.
- November 1, 2003** The first post was raised at the Plankhouse site during a special ceremony. Regularly scheduled work parties began in Fall 2003, and continued until the completion of the Plankhouse.
- Winter 2003 and Spring 2004** At Sunday work parties, volunteers continued to prepare eave posts, ridge and eave beams, and wall planks in anticipation of moving them out to the construction site in late summer.
- Summer & Fall 2004** Work parties and traditional skills workshops continued. Volunteer efforts were focused on critical woodworking activities such as cutting, planning, and finishing house posts and splitting wall planks.

- Fall 2004 -
Spring 2005** The fall, winter, and spring seasons were spent constructing the Plankhouse, moving the main focus from the refuge shop to the Carty Unit.
- March 29, 2005** Major construction on the Plankhouse was completed and the doors were opened to the public, 199 years to the day that Lewis and Clark stopped to visit and trade with the Cathlapotle People. Plankhouse volunteers were trained to lead public tours of the Plankhouse as docents.
- November 5, 2005** The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Committee and Cathlapotle Plankhouse commemorated the bicentennial of The Corps of Discovery's first trip past the Cathlapotle village. Planning began for a new group to support the Cathlapotle Plankhouse Project, the Friends of the Cathlapotle Plankhouse.
- March 29, 2006** The Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge and the Cathlapotle Plankhouse Project commemorated the bicentennial of Lewis and Clark's return to Cathlapotle. Special hikes, talks, and activities were held at the Plankhouse and on the Carty Unit of the refuge.
- April 22, 2006** The Friends of the Cathlapotle Plankhouse held their first membership meeting. Their mission is described as to "assist the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge in managing the Plankhouse to maximize its use as an educational and cultural resource."
- 2007-Present** In 2007, the Friends of the Plankhouse evolved into the Plankhouse Committee under the auspices of its sister organization, the 501c (3) Friends of the Ridgefield NWR. The Friends of the Refuge provides the fiscal and administrative support to enable the Plankhouse Committee to focus on development and implementation of high-quality educational opportunities at the Cathlapotle Plankhouse.