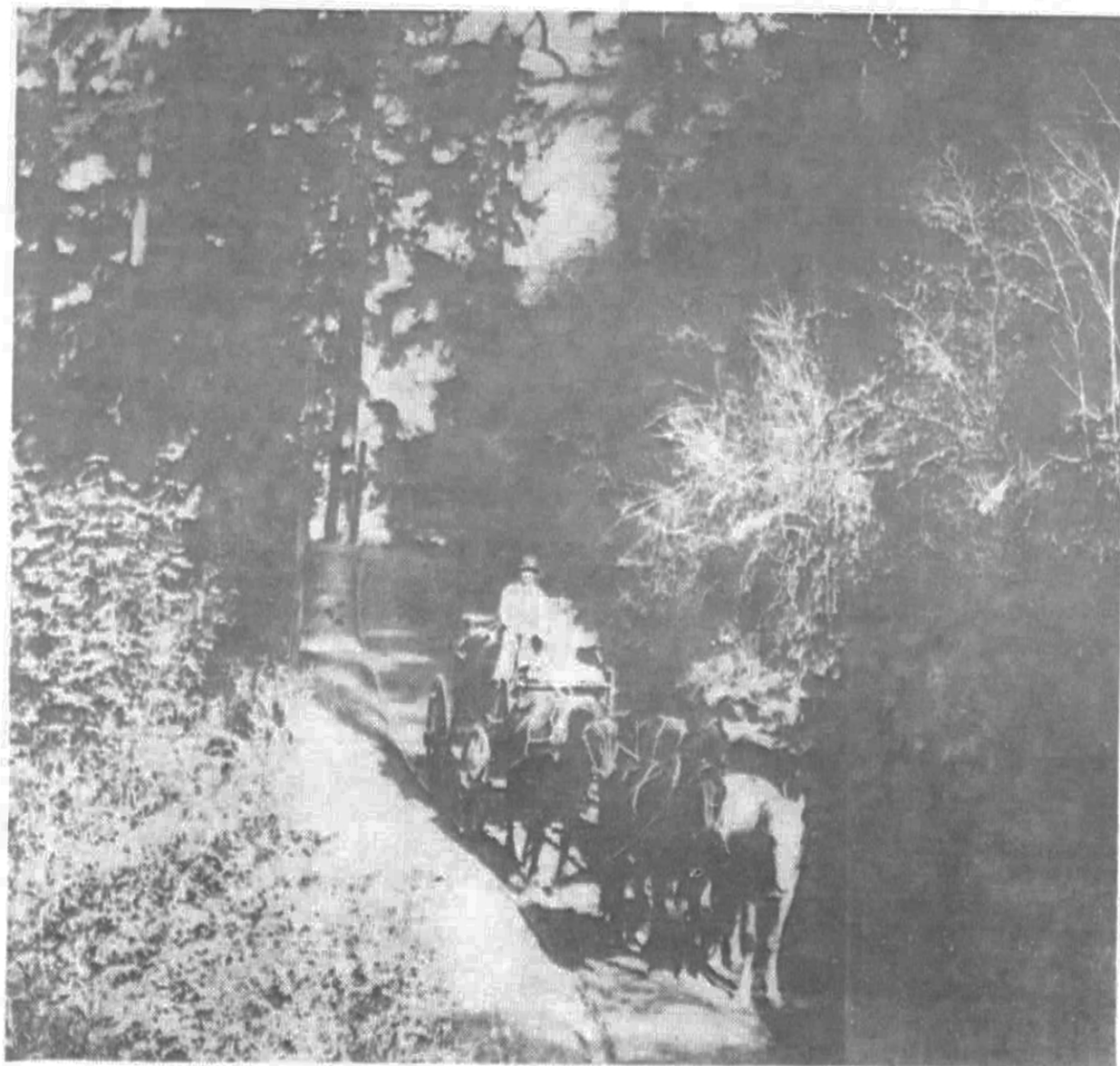


THE UMPQUA

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TWO OLD GUNS

By Harriet D. Munnick

(In the last issue of the TRAPPER, Alexander Dumont appeared on the cover with his gun. In this issue, Mrs. Munnick tells of the friendship between Dumont and Joseph Lavadour, two pioneer residents of Douglas County.)

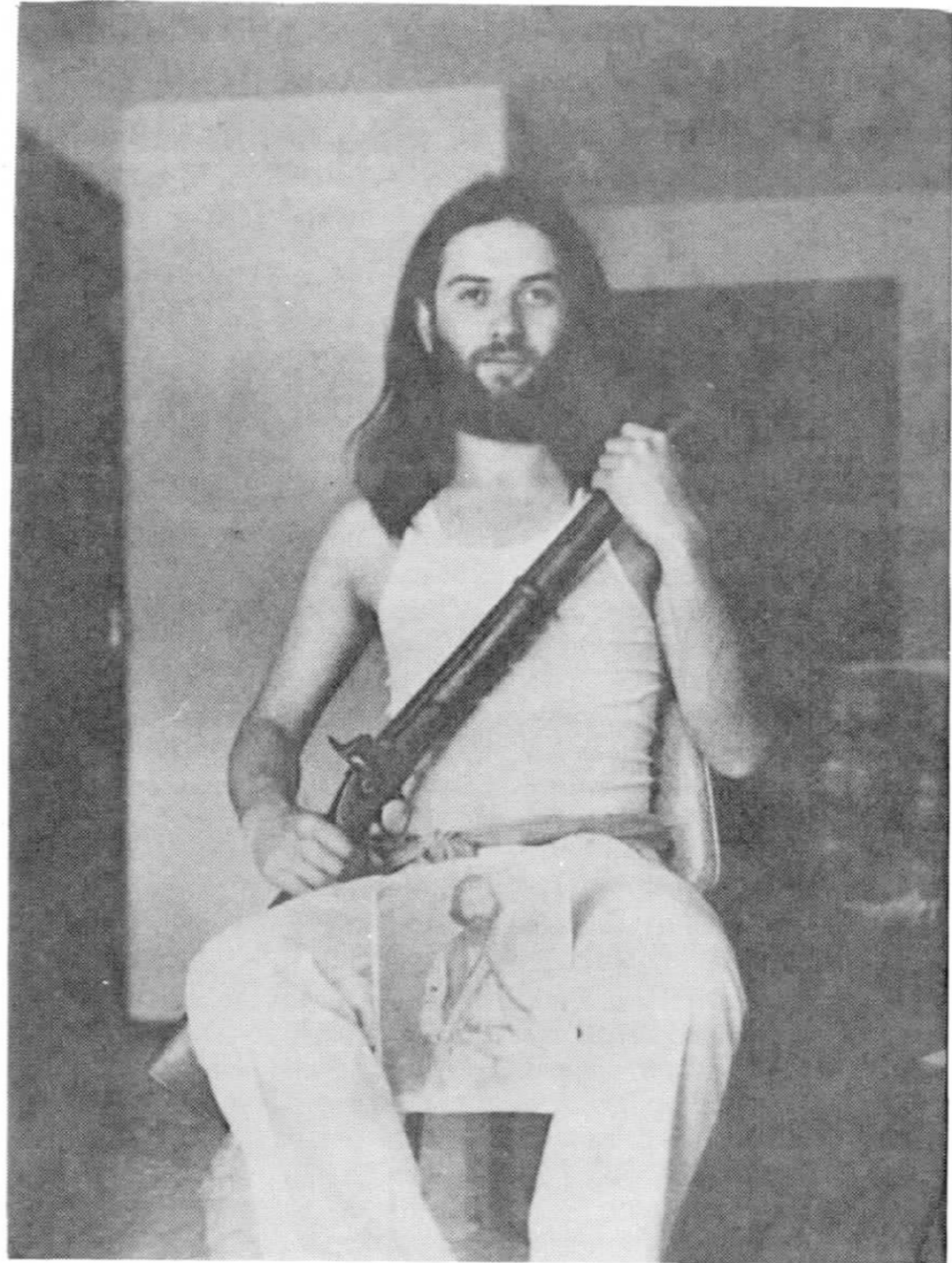
The accompanying picture of an ancient gun and the cover photo of the last *Trapper* (showing the Dumont gun) were taken a century apart, but the guns themselves were coexistent. The Lavadour gun is still in firing condition. The old men who owned the guns knew each other well and no doubt often hunted together, though their lives met, diverged, and met again like two shifting currents in a stream.

Joseph Lavadour, whose great-great-grandson holds his gun in the photo, was 24 years older than Alexander Dumont. Lavadour was born about 1791 in eastern Canada and was already in the fur trade in the West by the time Dumont was born. Their paths did not cross until Dumont himself was old enough to come west as a hunter and trapper in 1838.

Dumont does not appear in any of the Company lists and was apparently a free trapper, wandering at will on either side of the Rocky Mountains. He was called Gueret dit Dumont in those days, for in France two centuries earlier, Jean Gueret had married Francoise, the daughter of one Lord Jean de Meherence du Montmirel, a name shortened to Lord of the Mont-Du-Mont. The high-sounding name of Dumont thus became attached to the Gueret name, although Alexander made no claim to being more than "a half-breed Sauteaux from Green Bay, Wisconsin," and his wife "Josette Finley, a metisse Cree," or possibly Spokane. Both were Catholic from their youth, as most of French-Canadian descent were, and we may trace Dumont's roaming trails by the recorded baptisms made by the early missionaries.

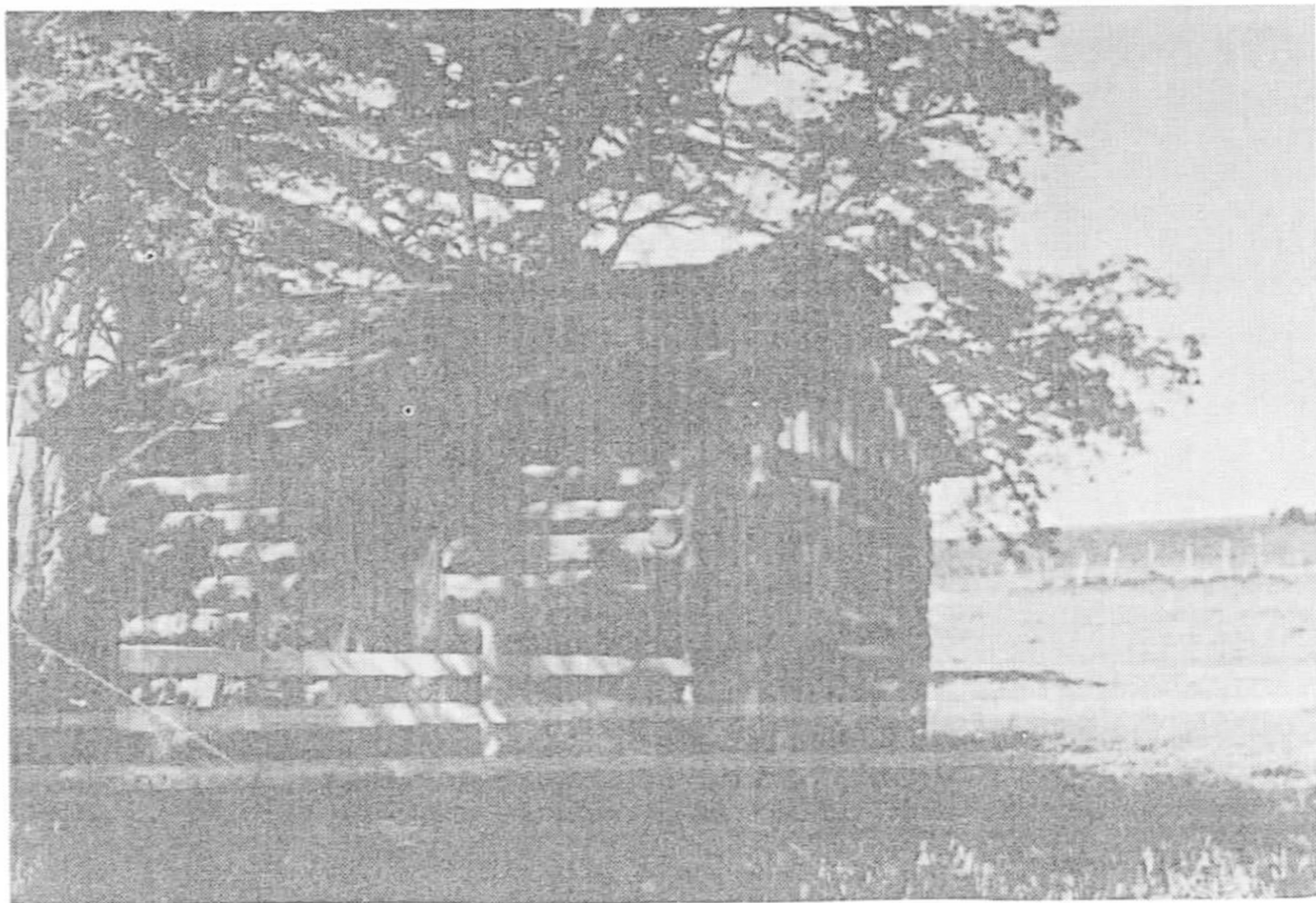
Thus we find them at Colville in 1838-39, where their first two children, Marguerite and Alexander, were baptized. In 1841 they were in the Bitterroot country of Montana, where Father Nicolas Point met them near Hellgate, in the Finley camp, and where he was in luck to find them, else he might have had to be godparent himself to the dozen or more Finleys big and little that he baptized there. They were at Cataldo, Idaho, in 1842, where their son Auguste was born, but the Finley camp had dispersed. By 1850 Dumont, Louis Brown and several of the Finleys were trying their hand at a settled life in St. Louis. Oregon, in the Willamette Valley.

But Dumont was still not ready to give up roving, apparently dividing his time between St. Louis and a Donation Land Claim on the South Umpqua in southern Oregon. He said in his application that he had settled his claim between 1852 and 1854, by which he may have meant he had started im-



Joseph "Joey" Lavadour IV is depicted holding the weapon which belonged to Joseph Lavadour I. Between his knees can be seen the Douglas County Museum photo of Alexander Dumont in a similar pose with his muzzle loading weapon. The Lavadours left Douglas County and settled on the Umatilla Reservation near Pendleton.

*Harriet D. Munnick Collection
Douglas County Museum*



This log cabin, built by Joseph Lavadour I, is still standing on the Umatilla Reservation, although now used as a storage shed. It shows typical French Canadian axe work in its construction.

*Harriet D. Munnick Collection
Douglas County Museum*

provements there. The family seems to have remained in the Willamette Valley, where it was increased with the births of Andre, the twins Marie and Genevieve, Francis, and an unrecorded David. By 1857 he was definitely "domiciled in the County of Douglas, Oregon," on a claim now known as the Michaels place.

At about the same time, Joseph Lavadour retired from his wanderings to settle near the present Milo on the South Umpqua. He had left the Hudson's Bay Company service, mined in California and done a stint in the Cayuse War that followed the Whitman Massacre. He and Dumont had no doubt crossed trails many times in the fur trade; indeed, it would be hard not to have done so. Now they became neighbors for the next twenty years.

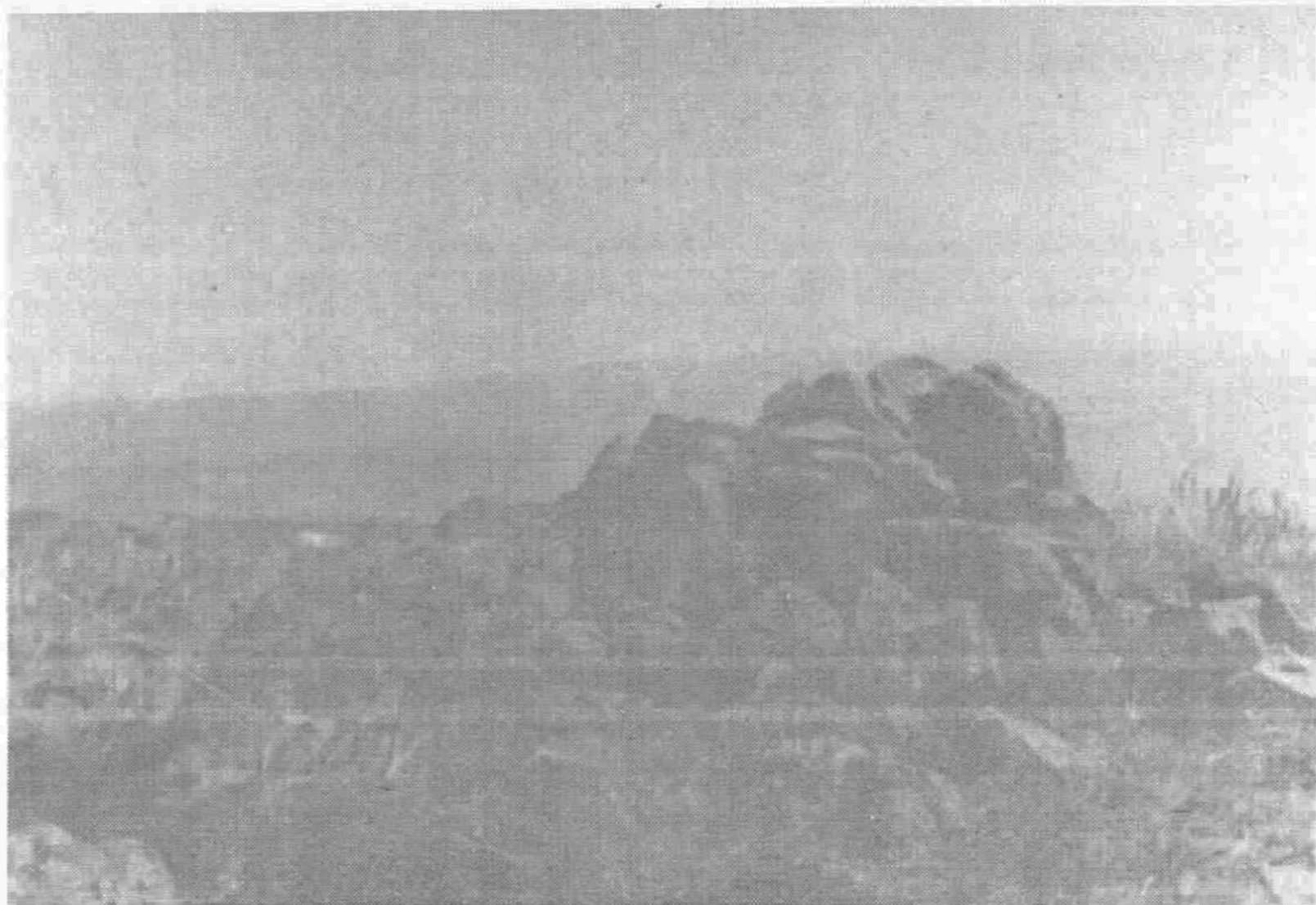
The often-heard legend that the two, "both from Three Rivers, Canada, and both with Pend Oreille wives, were trapping on the South Umpqua in the 1820's and camped with an Indian village on the present site of Milo Academy" no doubt stems from this considerably later era on their neighboring claims. (Alexander Dumont, according to his own affidavit, was born in 1815, too young to trap in that early decade.) Family tradition that is handed down through several generations may be fairly accurate in the main, but usually sets the date too far in the past—"It was all so long ago!" In any case, the two old guns no doubt brought down many a deer to fill the dutch oven on the fireplace hearth in the cabins of both as they ranged the hills together.

A family story relates that Dumont's grandson, Sam, "didn't need a gun, even an old one, to kill a deer once—just ran after it through the woods and threw a rock at its head. The deer fell dead in its tracks."

By the 1880's, Lavadour's family of seven children and Dumont's of fourteen had been reduced by marriages and deaths, and the men were growing old. Their ways parted when Dumont went to the Colville country to spend his last years, Lavadour to the Umatilla. Both left numerous descendants in Douglas County, where their names are still represented by many families. Dumont's son Auguste, buried on his father's farm in 1868, may have been the first in the present Lavadour Cemetery, though his grave is not identified. Dumont's last years are not well documented, although it is believed both he and his wife died at Colville and were buried in the Reservation Cemetery there.

Lavadour left a clearer trail. The solid cabin he built near Cayuse still stands, now used for storage and lacking the leanto kitchen it once had. If its old walls had voices, they could tell many a story of doings within and without; the grandchildren who participated must speak instead;

"I asked what my grandfather Joseph had looked like. Mother said, 'See that neighbor walking down the road, Mr. Morrisette? Grandpa looked something like him. Not notably large or tall, a moustache, no beard.'" All known pictures of him were destroyed by his son Xavier at his death in compliance with some Indian tradition.



This eagle trap, still in existence in the Blue Mountains east of Pendleton, shows the primitive method used by Indians to capture eagles, whose feathers were used for ceremonial purposes. See the story for details on how the trap was operated.

Harriet D. Munnick Collection

"Uncle X lived on in the same house. We went there for dinner one time. While my mother and Aunt Mollie were out in the leanto getting dinner, one of her girls took me into the bedroom addition. Mollie always had a white sheet over the bed. My cousin said she would teach me how to turn somersaults. She was turning them on the bed when her mother came in. I don't remember what she did to her, but I know what my mother would have done to me!"

"Grandmother's name was Tawasaklie. That means something like One-who-gets-her-work-done-early. Lizette was her name in English. Her sisters were Mrs. Eats-No-Meat, Mrs. Young Chief, Mrs. Matches, Mrs. Susie Liberty, Mrs. Yum-Sum-kin, and I'm not sure about Annie Hair—Poker Jim was Annie Hair's father—Annie was related somehow."

"Grandmother's sister didn't mind the rattlesnakes in her yard, for they were the spirits of her dead ancestors, but when they got too thick for the neighbors, she would pick them up gently and carry them farther up the hill to the rocks."

"Oh, the dances they had in that cabin! I can still remember going to them when I was small. No, there wasn't much room, but room enough—you just shoved the stuff back against the wall."

"I will show you a stone eagle trap on top of Sugar Bowl Mountain. It is like a pit with a half-circle of stone wall around it. They put bait on the wall, then they laid down in the pit and pulled grass and stones over themselves. When the eagle came down to the bait they grabbed him by the legs and killed him. The feathers for bonnets, bones for whistles, wings for brushes—they didn't waste very much of him."

Joseph Lavadour lived past the century mark, almost to one hundred one. The family lot in the Indian Cemetery at Mission bears the names of him and Lizette, their sons and grandchildren. The Lavadour name remains throughout the area. One Dumont has a Lavadour wife, with a rattlesnake hill behind the house; the old lines have united once more.

