Salem exhibit features weapons of Oregon’s past

SALEM — Weapons have nearly always been central to human activity throughout Oregon’s history. In its own way, each knife, bow or gun tells a story about who used it and the time in which it was used.

The Willamette Heritage Center exhibit “Tools of Survival: Oregon’s Past as Told by the Weapons that Witnessed Its History” continues through Saturday, Aug. 20.

A sampling of exhibits includes the Native American-carved Russian musket that bears witness to the Russian fur-trading expansion down the Northwest Coast; one of the first repeating firearms in the United States that traveled to Oregon with the Lewis and Clark expedition; and the resourcefulness of Native American defenders during the Indian Wars through the eyes of a much-repaired and very worn 1873 Winchester rifle.

These and other weapons highlight unique aspects of Oregon history — from the tools of Kalapuya hunters to the trade muskets of Hudson Bay trappers and the firearms of local law officers and law breakers.

The exhibit includes American, British and Spanish rifles from the 1800s. (Contributed photo)