

NARRATIVE OF ANDREW J. VIEAU, SR.

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE EDITOR.¹

My father was Jacques Vieau, the first man to engage in the Indian trade on the ground now occupied by the city of Milwaukee.² The family name was originally De Veau; but as that meant calf or veal, other children would annoy my ancestors in their youth, by bleating in their presence; so the name was changed to Vieau in self-defense. My

¹ Upon the 13th and 14th of June, 1887, the editor, while at Fort Howard, obtained from the lips of Andrew Jacques Vieau, Sr., this narrative of his recollections of early times in Wisconsin. The arrangement and language are largely the editor's, but the statements are strictly those of Mr. Vieau, who, though in the seventieth year of his age, appeared at the time of the interview to be in full possession of his faculties, mental and physical, and enjoying the complete confidence of his friends and neighbors. Unfortunately, his father, Jacques Vieau, left the son no documents, so that statements by the latter concerning Jacques are based on oral family tradition; but as to their truth he is most positive, claiming to have a distinct remembrance of what was told him by his parents, who spent the later years of their life in his neighborhood. It will be seen that Mr. Vieau narrates many interesting events in his own career, which are not mentioned in any of the published histories of the lake-shore counties. Because of this, the editor has been at much pains to ascertain the soundness of the narrator's memory, and is pleased to say that in cases where he has been enabled to gain outside evidence, direct or presumptive, on the point at issue, it has been invariably in Mr. Vieau's favor; while a large number of MS. letters addressed to the latter by John Lawe, Solomon Juneau and others, together with commissions and miscellaneous documents, presented to the Society by Mr. Vieau, in November, 1887, are also corroborative of his statements. An oil portrait of the narrator, painted in Milwaukee, in 1839, by Geo. P. A. Healey, can be seen in the Society's portrait gallery.—ED.

² An error. There were, off and on, several traders at the mouth of the Milwaukee river previous to the arrival of Jacques Vieau: chief among them, Alexander la Framboise, who commenced his trade in 1785. See Buck's *Pioneer Hist. Milwaukee*, i., p. 10; *Hist. Milwaukee Co.* (West. Hist. Co., 1881), p. 56; Buck's *Milwaukee Under the Charter*, iii., appendix; *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, i., pp. 35, 134; *Mag. West. Hist.*, pp. 639, 757; also *ante*, p. 210, where traders are mentioned as being at Milwaukee in 1779.—ED.