Reelfoot lake, created by vertical motion on the Reelfoot fault during the 2/7/1812 mainshock and possibly the 12/16/1811 dawn aftershock. The fault runs along the southwest edge of the lake. Photo shows Bald Cypress trees, which can grow in swampy conditions but cannot germinate under water. Submerged trees along the western and southern edges of Reelfoot Lake are thus inferred to have been submerged during the 1811-1812 sequence.

Account: The site of this town [New Madrid] was evidently settled down at least fifteen feet, and not more than a half a mile below the town there does not appear to be any alteration on the bank of the river, but back from the river a small distance, the numerous large ponds or lakes, as they are called, which covered a great part of the country were nearly dried up. The beds of some of them are elevated above their former banks several feet, producing an alteration of ten, fifteen to twenty feet, from their original state. And lately it has been discovered that a lake was formed on the opposite side of the Mississippi, in the Indian country, upwards of one hundred miles in length, and from one to six miles in width, of the depth of ten to fifty feet. It has communication with the river at both ends, and it is conjectured that it will not be many years before the principal part, if not the whole of the Mississippi, will pass that way.

Reference:

Account by Eliza Bryan, published in “Lorenzo Dow’s Journal,” published by Joshua Martin, printed by John B. Wolff, pp 344-346, 1849.