

Anonymous (1812)
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Extract of a letter from a gentleman at Fort Massac, to his brother in Maryland, dated Dec. 17, 1811.

"I did not intend writing you this week, but a late dreadful phenomenon, which happened, and still continues to alarm the inhabitants of this neighborhood, will probably excite your anxiety as to my safety. You will no doubt before this is received, have heard of the Earthquake experienced in this quarter, and as stories of that kind swell on their travels, a particular sketch of it may not be unwelcome to you. At 2 o'clock yesterday morning I was awakened by an intolerable rattling and shaking of the house in which I live (40 feet by 30) which at first impressed me with the idea of fire. On reaching the gallery I immediately discovered the cause of my alarm - the shock continued about five minutes, the upper story (in which I sleep) was so agitated as to threaten the whole fabric with ruin. However, the only damage it sustained is the loss of two brick chimnies which pierced the roof; they were broken off about six feet from the top; this was the case with four out of five in the garrison. It has returned after short intervals ever since, until 6 o'clock this morning. At 12 it was again felt; but so slightly that the alarm of the inhabitants begins to wear off. So far as I have heard from the country in every direction (say 30 miles) the effects of this convulsion have been the same.

7 P. M. The post rider has just arrived from Louisiana, thirty miles distant, the damage has been still greater."