

Copy of a letter from an officer of the United States Army, Fort Osage, MO,  
Dec 31, 1811

On the 16<sup>th</sup> inst. At about 6 or 7 minutes after 2 o'clock A.M. we were awoke by a violent agitation of the houses, the guard and centinels, who were awake at the time, say the shock was accompanined with a noise something like that of distant thunder, and the centinels affirm that the agitation of the earth was so great when it first came on, that they could scarcely keep their feet. It lasted about 8 minutes. Between the time of this shock and sunrise, we had four other shocks, less severe, but all of which caused the houses to shake considerably, and since the 16<sup>th</sup> we have had various other shocks still less severe but very perceptible. Those who were in the woods at the time say that the first and some of the other shocks shook the dead limbs off the trees in every direction around them. At this place the arch of one chimney has been shaken out, and all the others more or less cracked, as well as the plastering much broken off the hosues. From the best observation we could make the different shocks came from the south, and I can account for the dreadful phenomenon no other way than premising an eruption of the earth to have taken place somewhere on the southern continent of America.