

Mitchill, S. L. (1815)  
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The testimony of Colonel Samuel Hammond, in a letter of the 16th February, 1812, which I received from him, was to the following effect. He confined himself to what he knew from personal observation. The first shock he witnessed was on the 15/16th of December last. He was then at Herculaneum in Louisiana. A few seconds before the motion was felt, he and others heard a considerable roaring or rumbling noise, resembling a blaze of fire acted upon by wind. The first motion of the frame of the house on which he stood was tremulous. It began instantly after to rock pretty violently. This continued, as he thought, from ten to twelve minutes. The vibrations of the chimney were, perhaps, about three or four inches each way, and were in the direction of southeast and northwest nearly. The noise which preceded the shock was from the northwest. Its commencement was about two o'clock in the morning. One hour after there was a second, which was light, and of very short duration. No houses or chimnies were thrown down by either of those. About daylight of the same morning there was a third shock. The motion was very much like the first, but of short duration. This injured several brick and stone chimneys. Its duration between one and a half and two and half minutes. About sunrise the same morning there was a fourth shock. The vibrations of chimneys at twenty-five feet from the ground, were at least four inches each way. The direction was the same as the first. The motion of the earth was very perceptible. Cradles rocked, and the church bells rang. Several chimnies were cracked to their bases, and some were broken off as low as the stem or funnel. In this last shock, the water in the river Mississippi was thrown into commotion, bubbling like boiling water; and, in a few minutes, the whole atmosphere was filled with smoke or fog, so that a boat could not be seen within twenty paces from the water's edge; and the houses were so shrouded as not to be seen fifty feet; this smoke continued all the forepart of that day.