

Berry, D. (1908)  
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I have met but two people who had had any personal experience with the earthquake. These were Mr. Yearly Land and his mother. Mr. Land, when I first knew him, was about fifty-seven years old, and his mother was nearly ninety. His father Robert Land came to the Territory from South Carolina, and found a home place in what was then, the northern half of Gallatin county, and his family was one of the only six families in that part of Gallatin, at that time, 1809. The 3d Principal Meridan had just been run. The government survey of the country - where Carmi and Hawthorne Townships now are - had just been done by Arthur Henrie under contract with Jared Mansfield, Surveyor General of the United States. The land office at Shawneetown was not established until 1812.

At the time of the earthquake, in November, 1811, Mr. Land was a boy past nine years old; but the happening of that four or five months shaking made an impression on his mind that was clear and bright when he was ninety years old. He said the ground would shake and then rock and roll in long waves. After a short quiet spell, there would be another shock and roll.

His father had a clearing in the woods and just on the south edge of what is known as Big Prairie. In this woodland, extending southward to the hills on the Little Wabash, were oak trees of wondrous size. There was rarely any undergrowth. This primeval forest was like a well kept park. I remember those trees.

When I came to White County, nearly all the produce of the country went by flatboat to New Orleans. These flatboats were as long as a tree could be found to make them. The sides, or gunwales, "gunnels", they were called - single pieces of timber two feet or more, deep and six inches thick. Many a tree could be found that would yield a log ninety-five feet long, which would first be hewed into a stick two feet wide and a foot thick, throughout its entire length. This would be split with a old fashioned whip saw, making two "gunnels" ninety-five feet long, two feet wide and six inches thick.

I mention this timber to give point to Mr. Land's narrative. He said in these long continued rollings, the tall timber would weave their tops together, interlock their branches, then part and fly back the other way, and when they did this "the blossom ends of the limbs would pop like whip lashes; and the ground was covered with broken stuff".