

The writer is in possession of the following account of the earthquakes and its effects upon the Mississippi river that has never been written before hence has never been published. John Wiseman from Nelson County, Kentucky, was born in 1790 and died in Missouri in 1851; was at New Madrid during the shakes. He ^{was} a flatboat pilot and had descended the Ohio river and down the Mississippi as far as New Madrid, with a flatboat loaded with whiskey that had been manufactured in Kentucky. He had laid at the wharf for several days and had dropped down his boat several miles below the landing where he tied up and remained until after the shakes. When the next morning before day, (Dec. 16th 1811) he said: I was awakened by a roaring noise and if my flatboat load of whiskey had sprung a leak and made the "Father of Waters" drunk it could not have committed more somersaults. It seemed that old Vesuvius himself was drunk, and from that time on, at intervals, that roaring and shaking of the earth continued until about the 7th of February, and up to the 17th of February were many hard shakes, and on the latter day was one that excelled in noise force, and terror all preceding ones, when the earth was rocked about like a cradle and its surface rolling like waves a few feet high and in places causing fissures in the earth from which large volumes of warm water, sand and charcoal was blown up, the gas coming from these fissures smelling like sulphur. The country immediately around where our boat was moored was not perceptibly sunk, but the country northwest and west from where came the roaring noise was sunk many feet and also over in Tennessee east of the hills was sunk to a great depth. It was then that we saw a sandbar formed below us that extended clear across the river, and the water commenced rolling in terrific waves up the current and broke our boat loose from her fastening. This bar lasted only a short time; in a few hours the retrograde current soon spread over it again and we succeeded in making our boat fast with stout ropes and then abandoned it and returned on foot to New Madrid with my two flatboat hands. On our way we crossed a bayou near whose banks was an "Indian wigwam" where lived a defunct Indian chief named "Wapacapa" (John Big Knife.) Seeing nothing of the chief we stepped to the door of his "wigwam" when he arose without any fear or terror depicted in his countenance, but with a hideous and woe-begone look, uttered the usual Indian salutation "Whoo! Hon. Joe!" (my friend) and point-ing his right hand finger to the heavens and with his left hand, showing the tottering motions of the earth, he said: "Great Spirit ke-chi-monito, whisky too much; heep drunk, bine-by he make all gone Injun huntten ground."

On our arrival at New Madrid we found all was destruction; the site of the town appeared to have sunk ten or twelve feet. We returned to our boat in a few days and found it secure whilst nearly all other boats were lost. In a few weeks we continued our journey on to New Orleans seeing terrible devastations of the country as far south as Memphis; but the greatest destruction was west of the Mississippi river beginning from six to ten miles west and southwest of New Madrid.