

George Heinrich Crist, Nelson County, Kentucky recorded this account of the New Madrid Earthquake.



16 December 1811

"There was a great shaking of the earth this morning. Tables and chairs turned over and knocked around - all of us knocked out of bed. The roar I thought would leave us deaf if we lived. It was not a storm. When you could hear, all you could hear was screams from people and animals. It was the worst thing that I have ever witnessed. It was still dark and you could not see nothing. I thought the shaking and the loud roaring sound would never stop. You could not hold onto nothing neither man or woman was strong enough - the shaking would knock you lose like knocking hicornuts out of a tree. I don't know how we lived through it. None of us was killed - we was all banged up and some of us knocked out for awhile and blood was every where. When it got daybreak you could see the damage done all around. We still had our home it was some damage. Some people that the home was not built to strong did not. We will have to hunt our animals. Everybody is scared to death. We still do not know if anybody was killed. I made my mind to one thing. If this earthquake or what ever it was did not happen in the Territory of Indiana then me and my family is moving to Pigeon Roost as soon as I can get things together.

23 January 1812

"What are we gonna do? You cannot fight it cause you do not know how. It is not something that you can see. In a storm you can see the sky and it shows dark clouds and you know that you might get strong winds but this you can not see anything but a house that just lays in a pile on the ground - not scattered around and trees that just falls over with the roots still on it. The earth quake or what ever it is come again today. It was as bad or worse than the one in December. We lost our Amandy Jane in this one - a log fell on her. We will bury her upon the hill under a clump of trees where Besys Ma and Pa is buried. A lot of people thinks that the devil has come here. Some thinks that this is the beginning of the world coming to a end.

8 February 1812

"If we do not get away from here the ground is going to eat us alive. We had another one of them earth quakes yesterday and today the ground still shakes at times. We are all about to go crazy - from pain and fright. We cannot do anything until we can find our animals or get some more. We have not found enough to pull the wagons.

20 March 1812

"I do not know if our minds have got bad or what. But everybody says it. I swear you can still feel the ground move and shake some. We still have not found enough animals to pull the wagons and you cannot find any to buy or trade.