

## **Where Was the Largest Earthquake in the Continental United States?**

A series of four great earthquakes occurred in the central United States on December 16, 1811, and January 23, and February 7, 1812. All had estimated magnitudes greater than 7.5 on the Richter Scale, the largest happening on February 7, 1812. They are collectively known as the New Madrid earthquakes (after a small town in Missouri) and were felt as far away as Washington D.C., and Boston, Massachusetts. These events were felt over a region far greater than any other in the United States, an estimated 2 million square miles. There were fewer than 100 deaths, because of the small number of people living in the area. The earthquakes raised and lowered land levels several feet, created one large lake and several smaller lakes, and formed waterfalls on the Mississippi River. One small town was destroyed and there was extensive damage to structures and changes to land surfaces throughout the region. These earthquakes were far away from a plate boundary, and are the largest known to have happened in a mid-plate area.