

CONTEMPORARY EARTHQUAKE
MECHANICS IN CENTRAL UNITED STATES

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Problem

The earliest written account of an earthquake in central United States is of an event on December 25, 1698; it was felt by M. Jean Frs. Buisson de St. Cosme, Priest of the Seminary of Quebec, in camp on the mouth of the Wolf River near the present site of Memphis, Tennessee (Kellogg, 1917). Another reference to early earthquake activity, in what used to be the Upper Louisiana Territory, can be found in Stoddard's Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Louisiana (1812). He referred to the frequent occurrence of earthquakes in the region and suggested that at least some of the events were caused by volcanic eruptions along the waters of the Missouri River. However, despite these and several other early observations, it is the earthquake swarm of 1811-1812 which captured the interest of seismologists. This swarm of over a thousand felt earthquakes (Fuller, 1912) has been repeatedly and extensively studied (see Nuttli, 1973b), and clearly demonstrates the possibilities of a severe earthquake reoccurring in central United States.