

Otherwise the book reads easily. Scholars will soon regard it as the authoritative study of British-Canadian-American relations in the 1830s and 1840s.

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*The New Madrid Earthquakes of 1811-1812.* By James Penick, Jr. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976. Pp. 181. Illustrations, notes, maps, tables, essay on sources, index. \$10.00.)

The last decade has witnessed an immense popular fascination with natural and human catastrophes as they are depicted in literature and the cinema. Exploiting this trend, historians have also begun to explore men's reactions to former disasters. Students of the West have few such events of greater interest than the dramatic series of earthquakes centered near New Madrid, Missouri, in late 1811 and early 1812. The destructive shocks, felt as far away as the Atlantic coast, not only leveled that frontier community but also dramatically altered many regional landforms and river courses. Although the West was still sparsely settled, it contained sufficient eyewitnesses to assure legends, folktales, and scientific inquiries that reflected the senses of wonder, terror, and curiosity that the "shakes" evoked.

Penick offers a lively account of these topics in a lengthy article that his publishers have expanded to book length through the use of wide margins and an eclectic collection of maps and early prints. The treatment is episodic, ranging from the central story of human crisis response to such peripheral topics as the history of the early settlement of New Madrid. Although the earthquakes' epicenter lay in northeastern Arkansas, the valley of the Mississippi River is emphasized as a result of the disproportionate damage and death that occurred under its steep bluffs.

The author is at his best when analyzing the complex relationship between fact and folklore. Penick, in particular, offers a delightful treatment of the erroneous belief that the Mississippi ran for a time upstream. His work, however, is less successful in relating the shocks to many of the varied cultural responses of the era. The effect upon the southern Indian tribes appears in fascinating detail. Yet contemporary scientific studies are lightly touched upon, and the impassioned religious responses of fundamentalist westerners are largely ignored. Most of the oversights probably result from Penick's reliance

upon newspapers and travel accounts, which stressed the immediate secular responses of the West. Such comments notwithstanding, the volume deserves attention as an entertaining popular account of man's responses to the unexpected.

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*Shiloh—in Hell before Night.* By James Lee McDonough. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1977. Pp. xii, 260. Illustrations, notes, maps, bibliography, index. Clothbound, \$9.95; paperbound, \$5.00.)

James L. McDonough, a Civil War historian, has produced perhaps the first scholarly work on Shiloh. A book on the battle written by journalist Wiley Sword appeared just as McDonough's was being accepted for publication. Fortunately, there is room in the field for both. Sword's work, *Shiloh: Bloody April*, is longer, more detailed, and more in the traditional school than McDonough's. *Shiloh—in Hell before Night* has just over two hundred pages of text plus a helpful organization chart at the end. Mercifully, it is not only footnoted, but the notes also appear at the bottom of the page. It is well illustrated and has twelve maps—not enough, but more than are usually found in the average monograph of this nature.

McDonough raises several significant points concerning the battle of Shiloh and the Civil War in the West. He investigates the Confederate commander, Albert Sidney Johnston, and, refuting traditional scholarship, finds him lacking. Johnston's military experience was limited; in fact, he owed his high position to his friendship with Jefferson Davis. McDonough feels that Johnston never grasped the strategic importance of crucial points such as Forts Henry and Donelson, a neglect which resulted in their loss in February, 1862, and with them Kentucky and Tennessee. Even the brilliant strategic maneuver that almost resulted in overwhelming victory at Shiloh is not credited to Johnston but to his aggressive second-in-command, General P. G. T. Beauregard.

McDonough also argues that the defeat of the southern army at Shiloh did not result from Johnston's untimely death on the battlefield, as so many writers have maintained, but from blundering on the part of the Confederate field commanders. Indeed, to McDonough, the battle was lost when Johnston's generals disregarded the tactical plan to roll back the Union army's flank from the Tennessee River (a plan Johnston never firmly understood or clarified) and made a se-