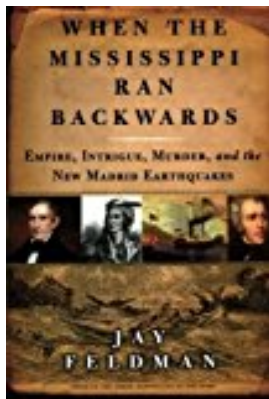


# [PDF] When The Mississippi Ran Backwards: Empire, Intrigue, Murder, And The New Madrid Earthquakes Of 1811-12

Jay Feldman - pdf download free book

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**Books Details:**

Title: When the Mississippi Ran Back  
Author: Jay Feldman  
Released: 2012-04-07  
Language:  
Pages: 320  
ISBN: 0743242793  
ISBN13: 978-0743242790  
ASIN: 0743242793

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**Description:**

**From Publishers Weekly** The shocks that devastated the Mississippi River town of New Madrid, Mo., and environs in the winter of 1812 were among the strongest earthquakes in America's history.

But in human terms they were fairly inconsequential (about 100 people died in the lightly populated area), hence the resort to empire, intrigue and murder to flesh out this engaging if haphazard survey of the Mississippi valley frontier. Journalist and scriptwriter Feldman gives a lucid rundown of the geology and seismology of the quakes and skillfully deploys sparse firsthand memoirs of the disaster to describe the titanic upheavals of earth and water that terrified onlookers. But that leaves most of the book still to write, so he brings in other developments tenuously related to the earthquake and the region. These include the brutal Indian wars of the early 19th century, the maiden voyage of the Mississippi's first steamboat and the murder of a Kentucky slave by his degenerate owner, which came to light after one of the titular quakes demolished the chimney where the victim's remains were hidden; a set piece of the Battle of New Orleans is tacked on as a coda. The author's attempts to tie these happenings together are perfunctory at best, but it's a diverting patchwork of events, with colorful characters, that Feldman's well-paced storytelling turns into a vivid historical panorama. *Agent, Alex Smithline. History Book Club Alternate Selection.(Mar.)*

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**From** Through four historical figures, Feldman re-creates the frontier world of 1811-12, when the New Madrid earthquakes devastated the lower Ohio and mid-Mississippi valleys. One central character is New Madrid founder George Morgan. Others include Lilburne Lewis, a nephew of Thomas Jefferson, and Nicholas Roosevelt, whose steamboat, the first on the western rivers, was maltreated by the Mississippi when the quakes struck. Together, the schemes of these men stand for the white settlement that was opposed by the fourth main character in Feldman's drama: Tecumseh. In fateful ways, according to Feldman, the earthquakes affected their projects: the tremors destroyed Morgan's town; they collapsed Lewis' chimney, exposing the remains of a slave he murdered; and they signified, to Tecumseh's pan-Indian movement, the Great Spirit's disapproval of ceding land to whites. Synthesizing lives and times, Feldman composes a fluent, coherent narrative that culminates in the War of 1812. Feldman's fine history on the New Madrid events parallels a popular work on their geology, *The Big One*, by Charles Officer and Jake Page (2004). *Gilbert Taylor*  
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