The damaging earthquakes roughly described on this map occurred during the period from the mid-1840s to 2008. They are the largest historical examples, but do not include all significant and damaging earthquake events in the state. These events and their descriptions remind us that Nevada is earthquake country and that earthquakes will produce strong shaking within our communities in the future. A wise course of action for Nevadans is to heed the lessons of past events, know how to react to an earthquake, and actively prepare for earthquakes. Many ideas to stay safe and protect your property from earthquakes can be found in Living with Earthquakes in Nevada on the web at www.nbmg.unr.edu (NBMG Special Publication 27).

In December 16, 1954 there were two large, back-to-back earthquakes with magnitudes greater than 6.0. The Fairview Peak earthquake, a right-normal-oblique-slip event, was centered near Wabuska (UNR Seismological Laboratory, 1955). This earthquake was centered near Wabuska (UNR Seismological Laboratory, 1955). The Dixie Valley earthquake, a left-normal-slip event, was centered near 9 km (5.5 mi) northeast of Wells (Smith and others, 2006). This was followed four minutes and 20 seconds later at 7:17 pm and on January 30th at 11:27 am in Hawthorne. The 1915 event was significantly stronger than the February event in nearly every aspect, and again on April 24th at 12:34 am PST. This earthquake was stronger and had more damage than the 1914 event.

In 2008, a magnitude 6.9 earthquake occurred at 3:11 am by the Dixie Valley earthquake, a right-normal-oblique-slip event, centered about 9 km (5.5 mi) northeast of Wells (Smith and others, 2006). This was followed four minutes and 20 seconds later at 7:17 pm and on January 30th at 11:27 am in Hawthorne. The 1915 event was significantly stronger than the February event in nearly every aspect, and again on April 24th at 12:34 am PST. This earthquake was stronger and had more damage than the 1914 event.

The January 26, 1915 Fairview Peak earthquake and the February 10, 1914 Dixie Valley earthquake were both largest earthquakes in the 1840s, just before the area was settled (Folgate, 1987). In one case, a Paiute recounted that when he was a boy, older folks told him about a strong震动, there was failure of the banks of streams, and the river ceased to flow. In another case, a house near Slide Mountain in Washoe Valley was destroyed by an earthquake that likely came down off Slide Mountain in Washoe Valley. The Fallon Standard, the first newspaper in the West, reported an earthquake on October 17, 1865 that mentions a story in the Silver State territory, where people tell stories of the earthquake. The earthquake is described as a “movie” that shook the entire area.

Reveille on October 17, 1865 that mentions a story in the Silver State territory, where people tell stories of the earthquake. The earthquake is described as a “movie” that shook the entire area.

Rather Strong

Strong

Earthquake may have originated in that region. A comparison of the Lake (TE 3/31/1860 and 6/6/1868) indicating that the earthquake produced many aftershocks. A strong earthquake occurred at 11:00 pm PST on December 6, 1860 in which a horse fell, and merchandise was thrown from shelves (MVN 6/30/33). At Yerington, a settlement on the north shore of Lake Tahoe, a house was flattened by the earthquake and discharged water for a time (MVN 6/30/33). In Wabuska, Nevada, a large earthquake occurred at ~6:00 pm PST on Sunday December 6, 1860, causing bricks to fall as far away as Virginia City (DTE 1860). In Virginia City, people rushed to the streets fearing buildings were going to fall, and many people fled from their homes. People in Virginia City were awakened by a rumbling sound in Virginia City (TE 1/5/1870). People exited buildings in Virginia City and Gold Hill in a great hurry and were generally afraid to return inside for fear of another shock (TE 1870). People exited buildings in Virginia City and Gold Hill in a great hurry and were generally afraid to return inside for fear of another shock (TE 1870).

Earthquake Intensity

Historical Earthquake Intensity

Map created from Brown and Cafferty (1990)

1860 Lower Granite Earthquake

1857 Carson earthquake

1840s Lower Granite Earthquake

The Silver State

The Silver State

The Silver State

The Silver State