

# Early Human Migration to North America

*300 MILLION YEARS AGO:*

Coal-age swamps cover most of the continent.

*250 MILLION YEARS AGO:*

North America, along with Europe and Asia, is part of the Laurasian supercontinent.

*100 MILLION YEARS AGO:*

A great sea floods the middle of the continent, dividing it into two landmasses.

*95–65 MILLION YEARS AGO:*

The Rocky Mountains begin to uplift.

*2 MILLION YEARS AGO:*

Ice Age glaciers cover much of the continent.

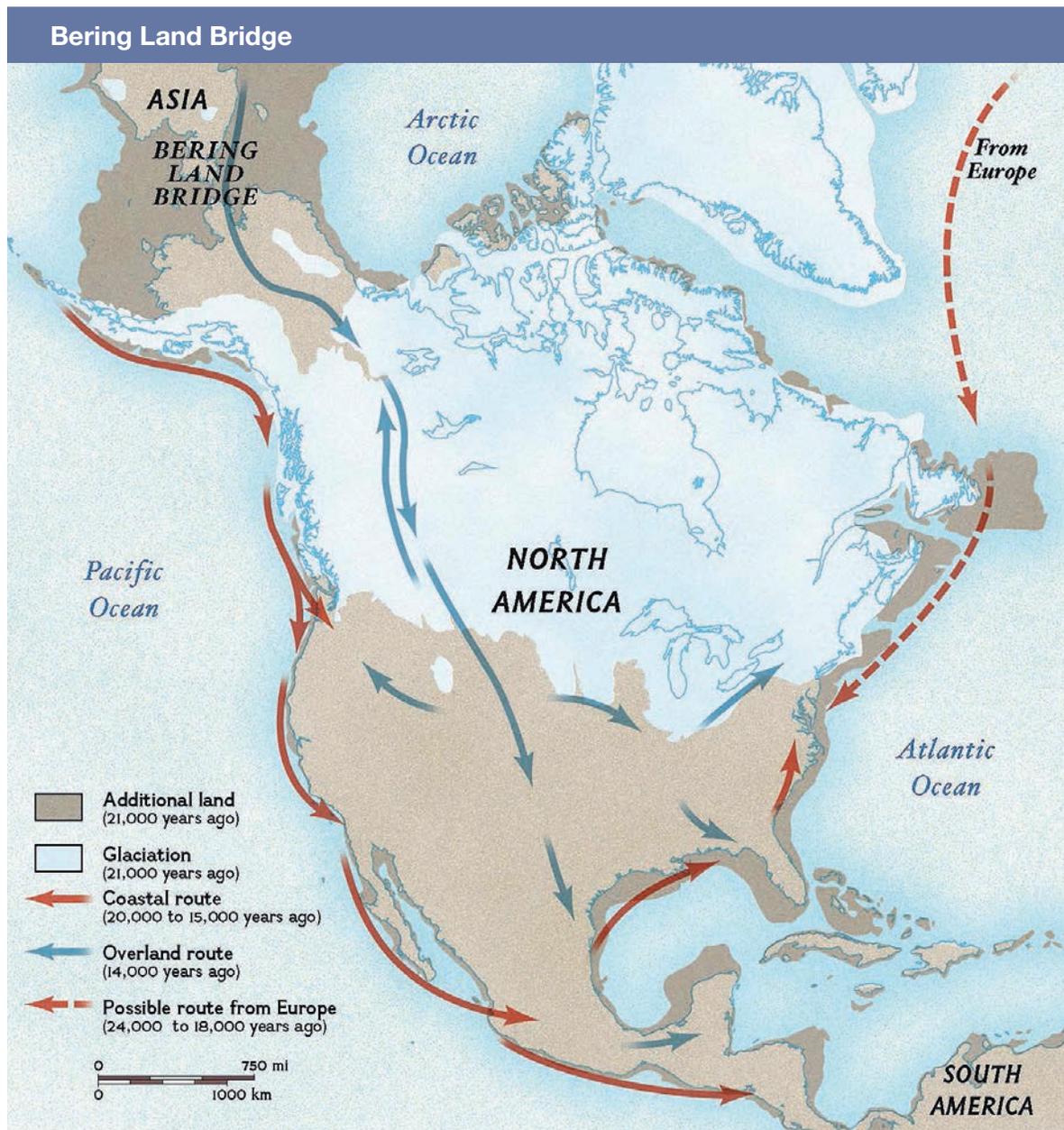
*30,000–15,000 YEARS AGO:*

First humans enter North America from Asia.

*New World Continents and Land Bridges: North and South America*

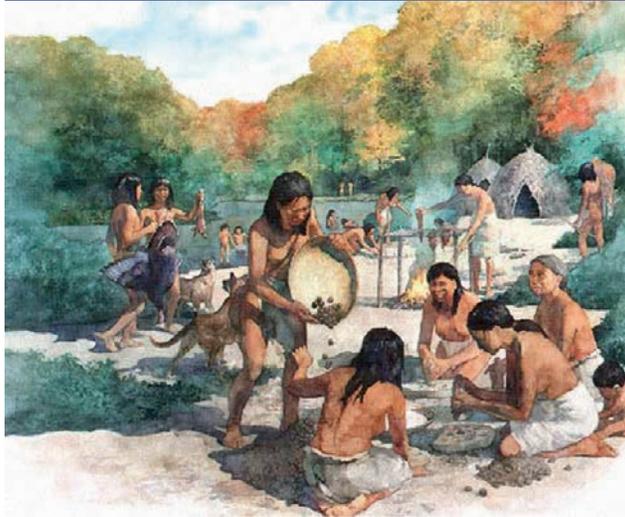
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## Hunters and Gatherers



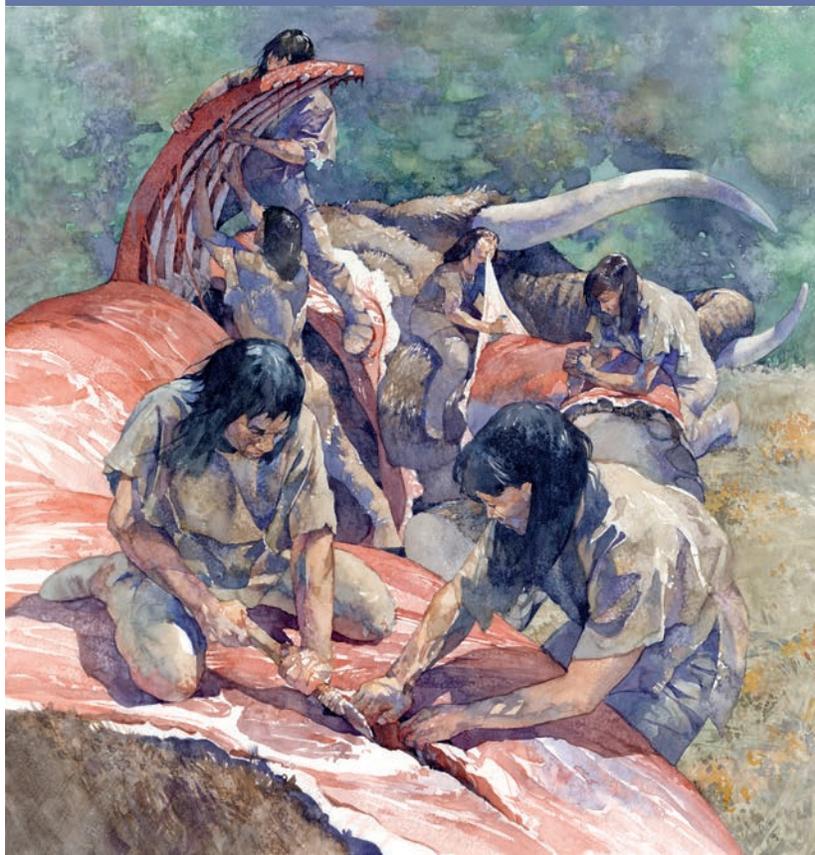
*Illustration by Greg Harlin  
Courtesy of McClung Museum of Natural History and Culture  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville*

## First Americans



*Illustration by Greg Harlin  
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### Women Butchering a Mastodon



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## “When Did Humans Come to the Americas?”

By Guy Gugliotta, *Smithsonian Magazine*

The peopling of the Americas, scholars tend to agree, happened sometime in the past 25,000 years. In what might be called the standard view of events, a wave of big game hunters crossed into the New World from Siberia at the end of the last ice age, when the Bering Strait was a land bridge that had emerged after glaciers and continental ice sheets froze enough of the world’s water to lower sea level as much as 400 feet below what it is today.

The key question is precisely when the migration occurred. To be sure, there were constraints imposed by North America’s glacial history. Researchers suggest that it happened sometime after gradual warming began 25,000 years ago during the depths of the ice age, but well before a severe cold snap reversed the trend 12,900 years ago. Early in this window, when the weather was very cold, migration by boat was more likely because immense expanses of ice would have turned an overland journey into a nightmarish ordeal. Later, however, the ice receded, opening up plausible land bridges for trekkers coming across the Bering Strait.

For decades the most compelling evidence of this standard view consisted of distinctive, exquisitely crafted, grooved bifacial projectile points, called “Clovis points” after the New Mexico town near where they were first discovered in 1929. With the aid of radiocarbon dating in the 1950s, archaeologists determined that the Clovis sites were 13,500 years old.

## Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898

By Edwin Burrows and Mike Wallace

### (Hunters)

Trapped behind the moraine [an accumulation of Earth and stones carried and finally deposited by a glacier], runoff from the retreating ice pooled icy lakes that drowned the region for several thousand years before their waters broke through a mile wide gap, now called the Narrows, and drained off toward the ocean. Scrubby pines and birches took root in the thawing tundra, and then gave way, perhaps twelve-thousand years ago, to stands of spruce and fir, interspersed with open meadows. Woolly mammoths, mastodons, bison, musk oxen, bears, sloths, giant beavers, caribou, saber-toothed tigers, and other large animals moved in. Trailing behind them came small bands of nomadic hunters—the region’s first human occupants—who stalked game for a couple of thousand years, leaving behind only flint spear points and heaps of bones as evidence of their presence.

Entire *When Did Humans Come to the Americas?* article can be found at:  
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/when-did-humans-come-to-the-americas-4209273/?no-ist=>