

My genetic trail ends with a marker, *M242*, that arose some 15,000 to 20,000 years ago, with a man born in the savagely cold climate of Siberia. His descendants were the first explorers of the New World.

My ancestors were an extremely adaptable people who survived by hunting large mammals using sophisticated weapons, including finely crafted microliths and inventing cold-weather living techniques still employed by their modern Arctic descendants. They developed portable shelters, clothing capable of protecting them from intense cold, and new tools for an increasingly challenging environment.

Despite frigid temperatures, some of the Siberian clan gradually crossed Siberia's ice-free tundra, traveling from southern Siberia to eastern Siberia. Once they reached the northeastern edge of Asia, they were ideally poised to enter a new world.

About 15,000 years ago they did just that. With much of Earth's water locked up in ice sheets, sea levels were some 330 feet (100 meters) lower than they are at present. Consequently, a land mass called Beringia connected present-day Siberia and Alaska and provided a crossing point for the peopling of the Americas.

There has been some debate about whether humans reached North or South America much earlier, prior to 20,000 years ago. However, the genetic data coincide with archaeological evidence for a Beringia crossing that enabled North American settlement only after about 15,000 years ago.

My ancestors continued their migration further south through the Americas. Just how they gained passage through the era's prevalent ice cover is unknown. Recent climate and geological evidence suggests that an ice-free Rocky Mountain corridor opened, allowing safe travel. A coastal migration route is also possible.

While some of the Siberian Clan remained in Asia—marker *M242* can be found in India and China as well as Siberia—almost all Native Americans are descendants of this man.

This is where my genetic trail, as we know it today ends. As additional data are collected and analyzed, more will be learned about my place in the history of the men and women who first populated the Earth.

