

What We Know and Still Don't Know About the Peopling of the Americas

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In 1989 in *American Antiquity* I wondered aloud “Why don’t we know when the first people came to North America?” I didn’t have a good answer. Nearly four decades later, our knowledge has increased in countless ways: we have more and far richer early sites, and a better grasp on the tools and technology used at them. We have gained new insights into human evolutionary history, to situate the peopling of the Americas more fully in the broader context of the dispersal of modern humans out of Africa. We have learned a great deal about the stage on which the peopling process took place – the route(s) possibly taken, and the landscape, climate, and environment that greeted people on their arrival. We even have the game-changing advance of ancient DNA, allowing us to answer questions about human population history we could not have previously even imagined asking. Even so, there is much about which we still haggle. I’ll do my best in this presentation to give a sense of where we are in our understanding of the peopling process, and where we still need to go.