

New South Pole marker honors planets, Pluto, and Armstrong

January 16 2013, by Jason Major



The new geographic South Pole marker that stands at 90° S latitude. Credit: Jeffrey Donenfeld

Because the [Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station](#) sits atop a layer of moving ice almost 2 miles thick, the location of the marker for the Earth's geographic South Pole needs to be relocated regularly. Tradition has this done on New Year's Day, and so this past January 1 saw the unveiling of the newest South Pole marker: a beautiful brass-and-copper

design created by Station machinist Derek Aboltins.

The top of the marker has seven small discs that represent the [planets](#) in the positions they would be in on Jan. 1, 2013, as well as two larger discs representing the setting Sun and Moon. Next to the Moon disc are the engraved words "Accomplishment & Modesty," a nod to the first man on the Moon.

And for folks who might think the planet count on the new marker is one too few, a surprise has been tucked away on the reverse side.

"For those of you who still think Pluto should be a planet, you'll find it included underneath, just to keep everyone happy," Aboltins said. "Bring back Pluto, I say!"

And so, on the underside of the marker along with the signatures of [South Pole Station](#) researchers and workers, is one more disc—just for the distant "demoted" dwarf planet.



Underside of the South Pole marker. Credit: Jeffrey Donenfeld

The marker was placed during a ceremony on the ice on Jan. 1, during which time the previous flag marker was removed and put into its new position.

According to *The Antarctic Sun*:

"Almost all hands were present for the ceremony, including station manager Bill Coughran, winter site manager Weeks Heist, and National Science Foundation representative Vladimir Papitashvili. The weather was sunny and a warm at just below minus 14 degrees Fahrenheit."

(Even though it's mid-summer in Antarctica, "warm" is clearly a relative term!)

Source: [Universe Today](#)

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