



Photo Credit: Jeffrey Donenfeld

The 2013 geographic South Pole marker was installed on Jan. 1. This year's version was created by science machinist Derek Aboltins during the 2012 winter.

## Return to tradition

### 2013 geographic South Pole marker sports classic style

By Jeffrey Donenfeld, Special to the *Sun*

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As tradition dictates, on New Year's Day the geographic South Pole marker was moved to its freshly surveyed position, and the new brass-and-copper plaque that tops the marker was revealed.

The [Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station](#) sits on a moving sheet of ice more than two miles thick. The site where the geographic marker, sign and American flag are installed drifts about 30 feet per year due to ice flow. In order to keep the marker in close proximity to the point where all the lines of longitude meet, the site is re-surveyed Jan. 1 each year. [See previous article — [A good point: South Pole geographic marker changes with the times.](#)]

The entire South Pole Station staff gathered outside between the old and new pole locations this year and formed a semicircle. Each person helped pass the American flag from its drifted location to the new location just beside the 90 degrees South marker.

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.

Once the American flag had been moved, Heist revealed the design of the newly relocated geographic South Pole marker. This year's marker was created by science machinist Derek Aboltins during the 2012 winter. It was machined out of brass and copper.

The marker shows the position of the planets as viewed from the South Pole on Jan 1, 2013. There are seven brass planets displayed on a copper inlay. In the very center is a small copper star that marks the South Pole.

It also "represents the earth sciences done from here, as we reach out to understand our planet. The large brass star represents astronomy and astrophysics, as it extends out past our solar system in the quest for knowledge," Aboltins wrote in his description of the marker.

"In the center of the marker (in brass) we have the sun, sunset and moon, with the Southern Cross, including the pointers. If you look carefully, the small inscription above the moon reads, 'Accomplishment & Modesty.' This was a reference to honor Neil Armstrong, as he passed away when I was making this section with the moon."



Photo Credit: Jeffrey Donenfeld

Close up of the 2013 geographic marker.



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The 2012 South Pole Station winter-overs engraved their names on the underside of the geographic marker.

There was even a nod in the design to disenfranchised Pluto: “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!”

The previous 2012 South Pole marker was removed from its old location, and a flag was placed in its stead to mark the previous site. The 2012 marker will be displayed at the entrance of the South Pole Station.



*Photo Credit: Jeffrey Donenfeld*

*The South Pole Station crew pass the American flag to its new location at 90 degrees south.*