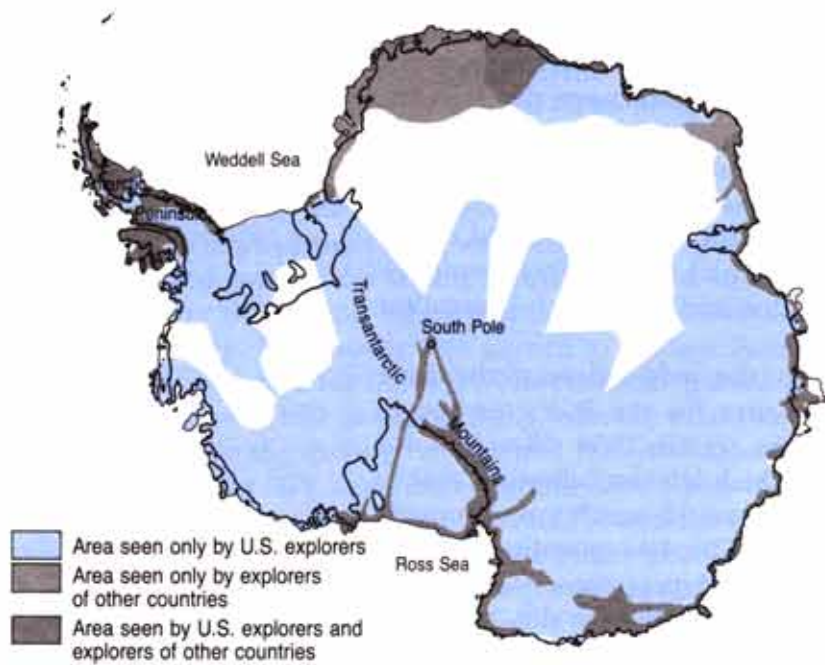


Area seen and claims markers put down by Operation Deepfreeze I and II.



U.S. government map released in 1960 at the ratification of the Antarctic Treaty, showing that 80 percent of the Antarctic continental area had been seen only by American explorers, while a smaller part had been seen by American and other explorers and a still smaller part seen only by explorers of other nations.

national activities may have some significance as grounds for potential claims to the areas where they occur. Examples include discoveries, maintenance of stations, detailed exploration and scientific observations, all of which are of extreme value if they result in physical evidence of a public nature. . . .” As for encountering foreigners, the guidance recommended minuets like the one Ronne had danced with the British earlier: “In the past such meetings have generally been friendly, although some have led to unpleasantness. No firm rules can be prescribed, and it may be necessary to use ingenuity to avoid incidents, while at the same time not relinquishing the right to freedom of movement.”¹⁰⁸

The orders for Deepfreeze I, issued the following year, included instructions to conduct mapping operations as recommended by TANT and to establish permanent stations in support of U.S. rights. But the orders for Deepfreeze II, issued a year later, after Eisenhower’s decision, required that operations support the U.S. IGY program. No mention was made of U.S. “rights.”

But the idea of an “American” Antarctica died hard, presidential policy or no. Henry Dater’s list of the location of claims markers shows that Deepfreeze II, as well as Deepfreeze I, dropped claims. Ronne even put one down after the IGY had begun in 1957.¹⁰⁹ Possibly similar reinforcement of the “prior” claim—which is allowed under the Antarctic Treaty—has continued since then, although there are no public references to such activity.

The United States at 90° South

By the time the IGY began on July 1, 1957, U.S. Antarctic policy had become an amalgam of nationalistic elements subordinated to international cooperation in the name of science. The age of science—and public belief that Antarctica was “international”—had begun. Even so, Siple and Navy Seabees had just finished building a station at the geographic South Pole, the heart of the continent and the point at which the sector claims met. This station symbolized the previous American interest in acquiring territorial rights to the entire continent, standing there in silent rebuke to the others, who had neither the money nor logistical expertise to build it. So if an image of the nationalist, expansionist legacy of the United States in Antarctica exists, it is this: the Navy’s best Seabees, who had trained for every possible contingency; the big silver and red Air Force Globemaster airplanes that left McMurdo and made the five-hour flight to the Pole; the pallets of building

equipment, scientific instruments, rations, humans and dogs falling into loose Antarctic snows while men in parkas ran around waving and shouting.

No men had stood at the South Pole since Scott in January 1912. But from the grave, Scott made his contribution. When Admiral Dufek decided that the snow around the Pole would be too soft to permit landing and takeoff of heavy, ski-equipped aircraft, one ingenious subordinate dug out the famous picture of Scott's party at the Pole with Amundsen's flag in the background. By examining how far their boots had sunk in, it was determined that the snow was hard enough to proceed. There were other reminders of Scott's awful journey. The first team was accidentally dropped 13 kilometers from the true Pole. Immediately short of breath and weakened because of the high altitude, they nonetheless dog-sledged and navigated with sunsights in the traditional manner until they found the exact spot. Once there, they kept moving the "Pole" around as the sightings were refined; meanwhile the prepared symbol for the Pole, a gay orange and black barber pole, sported from the roof of a new-built garage.¹¹⁰

What was the United States doing there, sending a team to build real buildings at the heart of the earth's most hostile continent? As Dufek had said of Antarctica years before, what good was it? The nationalist expansionist effort had failed, basically, since the imperfect U.S. claim was never promulgated by the government back home. The group of "Antarcticans" who had worked so hard to annex Antarctica to the United States—though for what purpose still was not clear—was being pushed aside by the new group of scientists with very different concerns. One thing had been accomplished: by virtue of its extensive visits, use of technology, map-making, and expertise about the region, by having the huge potential claim in its diplomatic back pocket, and by being interested in keeping the peace there, the United States had become key to Antarctica's disposition, during the IGY and for years after.