



This steel plate, bearing the initials of the cutter's sponsor, authenticates the keel of NSC 5 as "truly and fairly" laid. Photo courtesy of Huntington Ingalls Industries.

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## **Acquisition Update: Keel Authenticated for the Fifth National Security Cutter**

May 17, 2013

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Coast Guard and shipbuilder Huntington Ingalls Industries on May 17, 2013, authenticated the keel for the fifth National Security Cutter (NSC) James (WMSL 754) at the firm's Pascagoula, Miss., shipyard. Authenticating the keel is an important milestone, ceremoniously marking the start of construction of the cutter.

To authenticate the keel being "truly and fairly laid," a steel plate bearing the initials of the ship's sponsor, Ms. Charlene Benoit, was permanently affixed to the ship's structure. Mrs. Benoit is the great-great grandniece to the cutter's namesake, Joshua James, a legendary sea captain and U.S. Lifesaving Service station keeper who served the people of the United States for sixty years in an organization that preceded the Coast Guard.

Having saved more than 600 lives over the course of his career, James is best known for leading the heroic rescue of 29 mariners from five schooners stranded off the coast of Hull, Mass., during a 36-hour operation in the hurricane of 1888. Punishing winds and a blinding snowstorm complicated the rescue, which James and his crews accomplished using life boats.

"I'm remarkably proud that his legacy is honored this way, and to be offered the stewardship as being sponsor is just a wonderful experience," said Mrs. Benoit.

Each Legend-class NSC is named for legendary figures from the Coast Guard, including former commandants Adm. Ellsworth P. Bertholf (WMSL 750) and Adm. Russell Waesche (WMSL 751), as well as Capt. Dorothy Stratton (WMSL 752) who directed the Coast Guard's Women's Reserve, or SPARs, during World War II. The first three NSCs are commissioned and on active service from their homeport of Alameda, Calif. The fourth NSC – named for Founding Father and first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton (WMSL 753) – is under construction at Pascagoula.

The Legend-class NSC is the flagship of the Coast Guard's recapitalized fleet, capable of executing the most challenging operations, including supporting maritime homeland security and defense missions. The largest and most technologically advanced of the Coast Guard's newest classes of cutters, the 418-foot NSCs will replace the aging 378-foot High Endurance Cutters, which have been in service since the 1960s.