

*"Stepping the Mast"*  
**JAMES (WMSL 754)**  
*August 15, 2014*

The custom of "stepping the mast" by placing coins under the step or bottom of a ship's mast during construction dates back many years. Greek mythology states these coins would ensure payment of the crew's wages for their return trip should the ship be wrecked. Since at least construction of USS *Constitution*, this tradition has been passed on as a means of ensuring good luck for the ship.

In keeping with this ancient custom, seven dollars and 54 cents will be placed near the mast for good luck to represent the ship's hull number. The coins reflect dates of significance to the ship's namesake, Joshua James, and the ship's sponsor, Mrs. Charlene James Benoit. The following coins were placed at the request of the ship's sponsor, the U.S. Coast Guard, the ship's crew, and the shipbuilder.

Dollar

- 1889 – Captain Joshua James took his oath as Keeper of Point Allerton Station on October 22, 1889
- 1902 – Captain Joshua James died on March 19, 1902
- 1989 – Captain Andrew Tiongson, Prospective Commanding Officer for James, graduated from the Coast Guard Academy on May 24, 1989
- 2003 – The Joshua James Ancient Keeper's Award was founded

Half Dollar

- 1950 – Birth year of Ship Sponsor, Charlene James Benoit
- 1982 – Birth year of Matron of Honor, Kathryn Benoit Cardoso, daughter of Ship Sponsor.
- 1986 – Senior Chief Petty Officer Fernando R. Tiongson, USCG, father of PCO, retires.
- 2012 – The ceremonial Start of Fabrication milestone for James was reached on May 14, 2012.
- 2013 – The Keel Authentication Ceremony was held on May 17, 2013.
- 2014 – James (WMSL 754) was launched on May 3, 2014 by Ingalls Shipbuilding.

Quarters

- 1946 – Birth of Barry Charles James, brother of Ship Sponsor
- 2006 – Death of Barry Charles James, brother of Ship Sponsor

Pennies

- 1824 – Birth year of Samuel James, great grandfather of Ship Sponsor and brother of Joshua James
- 1826 – Birth year of Joshua James
- 1869 – Birth of Charles Melville James
- 1915 – Birth of Charles Alfred James, father of Ship Sponsor

Other items:

- USCGC *James* (WMSL 754) List of Families represented by crew
- Early photo of Joshua James and his lifesaving volunteer crew
- Photo card of Joshua James at the doorway of the newly created US Life Saving Station
- Photo of Joshua James as "keeper" in full uniform
- Photo card of early U.S. Coast Guard
- Station Point Allerton Challenge Coin



**Ingalls  
Shipbuilding**

  
Mr. Brian Cuccias, President, Ingalls Shipbuilding







Left: Actual mast stepping box with memorabilia from the shadow box

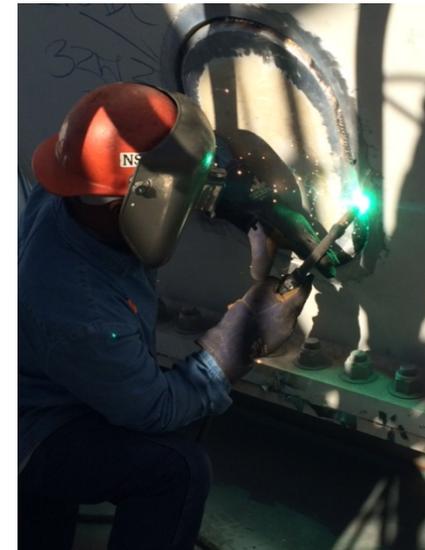
Above: PCO CGC JAMES and the “Egg-Man” (welder’s nick-name) prior to loading box into mast.



Left: PCO CGC JAMES and MR Jim French (Shipyard Program Manager) prior to loading box into mast.

Right: PCO CGC JAMES loads box into mast.





Above: Mast stepping box in container welded to deck in port side of mast.

Right: “Egg-Man” welding the container closed and welding the access plate to the mast...***Mast stepping box is now a permanent part of CGC JAMES.***





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1902 – Captain Joshua James died on March 19, 1902	1982 – Birth year of Matron of Honor, Kathryn Benoit Cardoso, daughter of Ship Sponsor.	2006 – Death of Barry Charles James, brother of Ship Sponsor
1989 – Captain Andrew Tionsong, Prospective Commanding Officer for James, graduated from the Coast Guard Academy on May 24, 1989	1986 – Senior Chief Petty Officer Fernando R. Tionsong, USCG, father of PCO, retires.	<u>Pennies</u>
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