RIDE THE ELECTRIC BOAT:

Historic Chief Uncas
Built 1912

RIVER DISCOVERY TOURS

HISTORIC CHIEF UNCAS
1912 ELCO Electric Motor Launch

SUSQUEHANNA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA
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The Chief Uncas is a classic 1912 electric-powered boat built by the Electric Launch Company (ELCO) in Bayonne, NJ for Adolphus Busch, co-founder of the Anheuser-Busch beer dynasty of St. Louis, MO. Busch acquired the boat for use at his family’s summer estate on Otsego Lake near Cooperstown, NY. The new electric launch replaced a 1910 gas-powered ELCO, also named Chief Uncas, which was damaged by an engine fire.

The Chief Uncas is 55 feet long with a 9.5 foot beam and 2.5 foot draft, displaces 12 tons, and is constructed of mahogany planking with white oak ribs and frames. After repowering with gas engines in the 1950s, the most recent Busch family owner, Mr. Lou Hager, a 4th generation descendent of Adolphus, restored electric propulsion to the boat for its 100th anniversary in 2012. The Chief Uncas is now powered by two 4-hp electric motors and sixteen 12-volt batteries that propel the boat at 8 mph with an endurance of 8-10 hours.

The Chief Uncas has cruised its entire 108-year lifetime on Otsego Lake, the headwaters of the Susquehanna River, where this ancient, scenic waterway begins its 444-mile journey to the Chesapeake Bay. After hosting public tours for 20+ years, the boat returned to private Busch family use in the early 2000s. The Chief Uncas is in fine condition and ready for a 2nd century cruising the waters of the Susquehanna.

**What’s in a Name?**

The Chief Uncas was named for a character in James Fenimore Cooper’s novel *The Last of the Mohicans*. Cooperstown was founded by the author’s father and many local landmarks honor his literature. The Uncas name was likely derived from the Mohican Sachem Uncas, a 17th century Indian leader in what is now Connecticut. The real Uncas guided his native people through the many changes and conflicts that ensued after English and Dutch colonizers invaded their homeland in the 1600s. Adolphus Busch’s naming of the boat for Cooper’s fictional Uncas reflects the common appropriation and romanticizing of Indian culture and leaders in early 20th century America.

**Funding for the Chief Uncas**

SNHA has secured private gifts and public grants for acquisition and startup costs of the Chief Uncas. Income from tours, charters, sponsors, and donations will fund annual operating expenses and maintenance. Your gift will help ensure the long-term care of this unique and historic vessel. Visit Us Online & Donate Today: [https://susqha.org/support/donate/](https://susqha.org/support/donate/)  
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