This quiet waterfront promenade was once part of a busy, noisy commercial district that included coal wharves, a steamboat dock, sheds and stores, and broad staging areas for local produce destined for markets in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Piers at both ends of the waterfront extended into the river some 250 feet to offer additional mooring places.

Although the arrival of the railroad in 1873 challenged water transportation, commercial fishing and shipment of wood and coal kept the port busy into the 20th century. The river is still a vital shipping lane; less than two miles north of the city, modern docks serve vessels destined for the oil refinery that stands on land where peach orchards once flourished.