

Tobacco remained a major commodity driving commerce at City Point. In 1840-1841, the total combined value of "foreign and coastwise exports" leaving Richmond and City Point was \$9,343,089. At \$125 per hogshead, tobacco accounted for \$4,305,312 of this total, while flour exports were worth only \$237,287.

Despite offering efficient service between City Point and Petersburg, revenues never reached levels sufficient to repay the debts incurred to develop the **City Point Railroad**. Unfortunately, the period of heaviest investment and borrowing began during a nationwide financial and manufacturing slump in the late 1830s. Only by cornering transportation between Petersburg and City Point could the company take in enough revenue to prosper. Instead, **by 1840, the Petersburg Towing Company had managed to secure a sizeable portion of the freight business by operating small boats on the Appomattox River**. Following a steady decline, **the directors had no choice but to sell the City Point Railroad to the Corporation of Petersburg in 1847**. Reorganized as the Appomattox Railroad, in 1854 this local line became part of the larger Southside Railroad, plying between the major commercial centers of Petersburg and Lynchburg. Following a trend toward consolidation, the Atlantic, Mississippi, & Ohio acquired the Southside, and this larger network eventually became part of the Norfolk & Western in 1881.

Along with the dependability of the rail connection, the **advent of steamships** added to City Point's commercial vigor. By the mid-nineteenth century, steam power had begun to assume a dominant role in commercial shipping, surpassing sail voyages in both speed and reliability. No longer as dependent on the vagaries of weather, the steamships made both passenger and freight service regular and punctual. **In 1860, three steamers made weekly trips from City Point to New York. Another line ran two ships on twice-weekly trips to Baltimore.**

Despite the opening of the railroad, a committee of Petersburg's city council still hoped to increase access to markets through navigation improvements to the Appomattox River. In 1849, an engineer named Albert Stein had made alterations to the channel near Petersburg to accommodate vessels with up to 7 ft. of draft. However, committee chair A. G. McIlwaine complained that the river was still too shallow for the types of vessels that typically carried cargoes of flour and tobacco that the city exported. These vessels drew 10 to 12 ft. of water and had capacities of 194 to 220 tons. This translated to cargoes of 1,800 to 2,500 barrels of flour or 125 to 200 hogsheads of tobacco. Given the draft limitations of the Appomattox, Petersburg's trade in these commodities was restricted to a half dozen vessels plying regularly between City Point and New York. Lack of competition and need for transshipment meant higher freight charges for Petersburg's commerce than for other cities in Virginia. McIlwaine also hoped to opening the river to larger vessels in anticipation of increased commerce once the Southside Railroad connected with the Tennessee Railroad.