

THE POTOMAC RIVER AND THE C&O CANAL

MAP FIVE

Mountain Lock to Opequon Creek

PADDLING THROUGH THE BATTLEFIELD at Antietam Creek is one of the best ways to view the site of the Civil War's "bloodiest day", September 17, 1862. More than 23,000 casualties were reported in this epic battle between North and South. At Burnside Bridge, where southern sharpshooters contested an advance of four Union divisions, National Park Service interpreters today describe the many attacks during that fateful day in September.

The Potomac and its tributaries have many other interesting sights for the canoeist. They vary from the difficult rapids near Harpers Ferry, both on the Shenandoah and Potomac, to long stretches of flat water for easy paddling. A few tips: make sure someone in your group is familiar with the area, or is an experienced canoeist. Check the river level before leaving, since during summer dry periods, small creeks can be unnavigable. Carry things you want to keep dry in a plastic bag, and wear old sneakers, because you may end up pulling, or pushing, your canoe out of difficult spots.

Above the Blue Ridge, the Potomac drains a series of ridges and valleys and winds through gargantuan bends that caused great difficulty during canal construction. The section of the river from here to Cumberland is far less populous than the lower portion.

