



Figure 1: Chain Rock Battery locality at Signal Hill National Historic Site (Crompton)

**SIGNAL HILL NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE:
MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY'S ARCHAEOLOGY
FIELD SCHOOL AND PARKS CANADA**

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Archaeological excavations at Signal Hill National Historic Site in St. John's were undertaken during July and August of 2008. This was a joint venture between Memorial University's Archaeology Field School and Parks Canada. This project provided field school participants with a unique opportunity to learn archaeological excavation methods during the excavation of a historic-period site. Our work centred on the Chain Rock Battery locality at Signal Hill NHS; the work area was a low-lying terrace that projects into the Narrows, at the entrance to the harbour (See Photo 1). Our research focused on identifying the range of archaeological deposits at the site. Documentary evidence indicates that this area was home to some of the Park's earliest fortifications, and use of the site contin-

ued right up through the Second World War. This terrace had never been evaluated archaeologically, and is threatened by erosion and instability. Thus, the project was able to combine a research agenda with corresponding cultural resource management goals set in place by Parks Canada.

Our project was able to determine that twentieth century occupations (both Second World War and post-war) are easily demonstrable at the site; these occupations have, to some degree, disturbed older contexts. However, an undisturbed context was discovered below these layers, provisionally dated from the late eighteenth through to the mid-nineteenth century. An artificial terrace and retaining wall had been constructed of stone (see lower terrace and stone wall in Photo 2); below this lay the remains of a small midden, containing fish and mammal bone and broken ceramics. This midden lay on top of a second rubble-filled terrace, which likely extended right out to the outer boundary of the Chain Rock terrace. There may well



Figure 2: Artificial terrace and retaining wall (Crompton)

be older deposits below this, covered by the nineteenth-century construction. However, we left the nineteenth-century walls and rubble terraces *in situ* so that we would not destabilize the extant stone retaining walls that surround the locality today. The Chain Rock excavations provided a glimpse into this little-known occupation at Signal Hill, and we hope to continue this joint venture between the Memorial University Field School and Parks Canada in the future. 🗡️