WHAT IS "REVISIONIST HISTORY?"

Historical scholarship relies on revision. Scholars of the Civil War continually revise through:

1. New Sources
   Letters of soldiers, women, and enslaved persons help us to understand what they thought the war was about.

2. Expanding Interpretations
   Active participants in the Civil War and Civil War-era included African Americans, Asian Americans, and women.

3. Increasing Diversity
   Scholars from more diverse backgrounds have asked different questions and uncovered different answers than historians in earlier periods.

4. Opening up the Conversation
   Confronting the segregated histories of Civil War sites, such as Fort Bunkerhill in Washington, D.C., creates new ways for visitors to engage with these historic places.

5. Shifting Scholarly Understandings
   Contemporary concerns about endless war and environmental destruction have led Civil War scholarship to focus on "dark" topics.

6. An Evolving Process
   Commemorations of major events, such as the Battle of Gettysburg, shift over time to reflect contemporary concerns.

“Historians revise what previous historians have said. The writing of history often reflects the times in which historians are writing. The things that matter to us are reflected in the scholarship.”

- Rachel Shelden, Director, George and Ann Richards Civil War Era Center and Associate Professor of History, Pennsylvania State University

Part two of a larger series
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