Welcome to audio lecture number eight. Last time we finished off talking about the end of the Mexican-American war and how starting in 1848 the United States would take over a big chunk of land including Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California and right now we're going to start off focusing specifically on what happened in California to the native population after the United States took over. So let's talk a little bit about life in California. We already saw how California Indian tribes were hard hit by the missions for quite a while. They will be even more hard hit by the gold rush. The missions had cut their population in half over a period of almost a hundred not quite a hundred years maybe 80 years or so but by now so in 1848 you have about 150,000 American Indian peoples in California. By beginning of the 1860s there would be less than 30,000 American Indian peoples in California. So just looking at the numbers you can understand that something really ugly takes place during that time the moment the United States take over. You know I tend to hesitate to use the word genocide loosely because the idea of genocide is the idea of an intentional wipe out of a population and you know much of what happens between the natives and Euro-Americans is not genocide. It's ugly, it can be weird but it's not really genocide. What happened in California fits the bill a lot more because what you have is that you have entire towns that will sponsor what are known as Indian hunts. You have the state of California will pay groups of volunteers to go out and kill Indians in some cases even offering bounties for the scalps that they bring in and there's no effort being made to distinguish friendly native, hostile native. The idea is they all need to go which is the textbook definition the textbook definition of genocide and some of the actors involved in this are pretty open that what they are doing is genocide. Consider the words of the governor of California in 1851 P.H. Barnett. He stated a war of extermination will continue to be waged between the two races until the Indian race becomes extinct. Well that's like right there from the horse's mouth you have the idea that what they are engaging in is a war of extermination which is a long-winded way of saying genocide. Consider the kind of stuff that was printed in the newspaper at the time in the Eureka Herald in 1853 wrote we hope that the government will render such aid as will enable the citizens of the north to carry on a war of extermination until the last red skin of these tribes has been killed. Extermination is no longer a question of time. The time has arrived the work has commenced and let the first man who says treaty or peace be regarded as a traitor. I could go on and on and on because there are so many examples of things like that but basically you know to cut it simple what happens is that the state of California supported these militias going out and wiping out entire villages and while the federal government officially never endorsed this they will pay the government of California kind of refunding them of any money they have spent for doing this stuff so indirectly well actually not that indirectly but even the federal government gets into this business because you know they are supporting a state government that's openly engaging in genocidal campaigns so the story it's really ugly you know what happens in California is really nasty what end up happening is that eventually the federal government will decide to step in and put an end to the genocide by then the vast majority of native people in California have been wiped out there's maybe 30,000 people left and they are given this tiny little reservation scattered around tremendous amount of cultural loss a lot of the culture of these tribes die out when 80 percent of their people die you really don't hear about California Indian tribes until very recently and the only reason you hear about them recently is because they have casinos today and being in California close to some big cities they can make banks so the California native casinos are very wealthy that's really the only reason why they even show up again their invisibility from the late 1800s through much of the 1900s is due to them having been victims of genocide now when you think about there are things that you know if somebody tells you about some horrible things that happened somewhere else 500 years ago it's like yeah it's horrible but whatever this was something that was going on in the 1850s and 1860s in California it's not that long ago you know it's like a couple of people lifetimes and it wasn't happening somewhere else it was happening literally right here under our feet where I'm recording right now so it's kind of too close for comfort it's a really really ugly story which interesting enough to this day even most people who go to school in California never got to hear about it I would bet that most of you even in California history classes were never the topic of what happens to the native population during the gold rush just doesn't pop up and yet and you know you can see why because it's a really ugly dark story and personally I don't understand it because it's not like me or you were involved in genocide so I don't really see what's so hard about acknowledging that something ugly happened but in many many cases you people being hesitant about coming to terms with the ugly pages in the history of their own nation and this is definitely one so how all of this affects all those tribes on the great plains because what happens is that now the United States owns all the land east of the Mississippi and now they own all of this land in the south you know Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California and lots of people want to travel to California for the gold rush but it's not really practical to go all the way south and then you know many people want to be able to cut across from let's say the northeast to California that means having to travel through the great plains which are still American Indian land so in 1851 the government by distributing gifts to different tribes they get one of the largest gathering of tribes ever in 1851 and get them to sign the first Fort Laramie treaty there will be a second treaty almost 30 years later this is the first one in 1851 Fort Laramie treaty what this treaty does essentially is this the US will pay the tribes for the travel but the tribes will let American citizens travel unmolested through their lands and most of the tribes are fine with it they don't really mind their idea is well as long as you don't stop and take over the land if you keep going sure we don't mind if you travel through this is going to be nice in theory problematic in reality because what's going to happen is that the sheer numbers of people traveling through native lands are it's going to cause problems you're going to have some of these people who you know they let their cows graze and start eating most of the grass that the bison depend on causing the bison herds to change their migratory patterns which become a real big problem for some of the tribes who rely on them they may use a lot of firewood along the way and there's not a whole lot of firewood to begin with on the great plains they will inevitably bring their own diseases with him their own germs which are going to spread to the tribes killing a lot of people so while the four larami treaty is going to hold for a while the initially warm feelings between natives on the great plains and americans start getting things start getting a little uglier every year plus you have some people who decide to stop and set up home somewhere in the area that's native lands so slowly but surely what was supposed to be a deal of like they'll just travel through and we give you some gifts become progressively more problematic so what the u.s will do is that they will approach those tribes that are most affected by american expansions the one that are the ones that are basically at the edge of the united states and feel more the pressure tribes in minnesota and the eastern part of south dakota places like this i'll give you guys an example of how reservations are created and you know we're just going to use this one but if you repeat the same story over and over again it's kind of what happens in many many different places but let's use the example of the yankton tribe the yankton were a subdivision of the lakota or sioux there are sometimes different names for the same tribe and the yankton were one of the sub bands what happens in the 1850s is that the united states will approach the yankton they will hire a guy by the name of charles picot to say look why don't you picot was a half blood he was part yankton and part french and the u.s will hire this guy to try to convince the tribe to sell the land to sign a treaty and sell the land so a few yankton leaders go out to washington and even that's interesting why couldn't they just discuss the treaty on yankton land why get some of the leaders away from the tribe and bring them to washington a lot of it was sheer intimidation you know make them travel to a few big american cities make them see how many people the united states has so that they will be more willing to say yes to whatever you propose to them eventually the some of these leaders signed this treaty you know the yankton treaty signed in 1858 and essentially what the treaty does is they sell let's say 90 to 95 percent of their land to the united states they will settle on this small little chunk of what they used to own which will be called the reservation and in exchange for selling their most of their land the united states will take care of them for generations to come the way the understanding there is uh we are going to be taking your way of life we're going to be taking your economy you're going to be taking your political independence we're basically going to completely change our lifestyle but at least you still got to have a land base and you know most native peoples were not enthusiastic about signing treaties like this because of course it's a bad deal but the way they saw it was these guys may take our land anyway let's at least get something for it you know let's uh if we're not able to defeat the united states in war and stop them from taking the land let's take at least the best deal we can some people supported this idea among the yankton other people were deeply opposed they thought that this was selling out and this kind of dynamics happen unfailingly when people are given these bad choices it's like do you want to give up your whole life and settle on five percent of your land and sure we'll take care of you for a while or do you want to fight it out and we'll probably squash it neither choice is a good one so different people in the tribes would uh fracture politically when faced with these ugly choices in any case the treaty is signed oddly enough by the way when they were meeting in washington to sign the treaty they were told that the water in washington was really polluted and many native people died when they came there only white people could drink the water because they were used to it so they should just drink a bunch of whiskey and then they would be safe which was basically a way to keep them drunk the whole time so that they would be more malleable and it would be easier to convince them to sign the one of the first agents for the yankton reservation was a man by the name of walter borley now what does it mean agent well the government since they would have to set all these supplies aside for taking care of the tribe for for a while they would have one of their own employees a government employee would become the agent of the reservation basically the person who would oversee the distribution of all of these resources in this case is this guy by the name of walter borley the what borley does is very very typical of reservation life what borley does is try to start skimming every possible scent he can that's supposed to go from the government to the tribes his job is going to figure out a way that that money falls into his pockets instead so for example let's say that he charges the government for buying a hundred cows for the tribe he gave a fair market value for a hundred cows what he really did was find the hundred cheapest and sickest cows that were there barely alive so buy them for below market price and then pocket the difference or you know he would charge the government for building a school among the youngton for the material for the school teacher all of that and the reality is that no school was ever built this was just a way of creative accounting you know finding a way to again justify the fact that money disappeared so what typically happened was you would have tribes would get upset because they were promised this stuff they say hey we gave up all of our land all of our land our way of life but you said you would take care of us where are the supplies the government agent would say hey it's washington's fault back in washington they didn't send us the goods let me keep working on that when in washington politicians would hear about it they may ask the reservation agent and you'd say well you see how much i've spent for these people they are just ungrateful they don't know what they are talking about and so essentially what end up happening is that in the red tape of different government offices blaming one another american indian peoples would get screwed over and they don't get what they were promised so and in this process lots of people made money the reservation agents being notoriously corrupt made money there was a whole long list of people who made money along the way you know guys like walter burley left behind some documents where they clearly indicate that they were using some of the money to bribe senators and congressmen and everyone along the line so that they would turn a blind eye to what he was doing so long story short reservations will for a long time be very very corrupt places and american indians would often get the short end of the stick in some cases this kind of abuses could turn really ugly in minnesota among the santi tribe which was just next to the basically right next to the youngton they similarly got not taken advantage of they did not get their supplies they were starving when they complained to the government agent he replied to them saying if you guys are hungry that's not my problem go eat grass the santi didn't take it well so they decided to rebel in 1862 and launch what will become known as the minnesota uprising so they go kill a bunch of settlers who are now in their land trying to take their land back the idea being you know you promised us all these goods to give up the land you're not holding your end of the bargain so we're gonna take the land back the army will come in to squash this rebellion and you know they will find one of the first people that the santia killed was the government agent who told them if you guys are hungry go eat grass and just to show that they had a sense of humor about it the government agent will be found dead on the plains with his mouth stuffed with grass in any case the rebellion will be crushed and at the end of it some 38 santi warriors will be hanged in the biggest legal mass execution in u.s history you know there have been times when maybe illegally was done there were more people but this is the one occasion in which the death penalty is being legally administered to as many to the greatest number of people in u.s history 38 people on the same day were hanged in minnesota at the end of this uprising this lesson is not going to be lost on some of the tribes further west who are going to see what happens and they are going to decide to resist they are going to be a little less willing to sign a deal to settle on a reservation so this is something that we're going to be seeing next one quick thing i should mention before we continue is that much of the material that we're going to be covering in the next bit and possibly even in the next lecture they are going to be covered even in considerably more detail in the crazy horse series and in the war for the black hill series so i'm going to assume certain things that you guys are already familiar so i'm not going to repeat the same things 12 times i'm just going to kind of focus on the essential things right here i should also mention that there's another podcast that i did not assign to you is not required for the course but if you are interested in this topic it's definitely strongly recommended and it's you know easily available to you it's another episode of history on fire that focuses specifically on the sand creek massacre that we'll be briefly discussing soon and it goes into a lot more detail regarding the cultural context the cheyenne tribe what happened at the massacre and everything else that's episode number i believe is let me check it is episode number 32a of the of history on fire so the same place where you got the crazy horse podcast the war for the black hills podcast episode 32a which is part one focuses on on sand creek so check that out only if you want again it's not a sign it's just an extra resource for you because you know the thing is i'm cutting things rather short sometime i'm just trying to give you a bird's eye view of american indian history and some of the quick more most essential facts but of course i don't want to sacrifice in case you are really interested in the topic i'm more than happy to give you guys more resources that you can tap into and check out so keep that one in mind if that's something that you want to hear more about having said that let's continue on with our lecture so let's get going with what happens on the plains well basically what happens on the plains is that up until the early 1850s the united states and the plains tribes were in a state of relative peace things begin to turn ugly in 1854 when supplies that the government had promised to some native tribes in order to let a bunch of american travelers travel through are not delivered in time and this was something that kept happening over and over for several years so in this one occasion the specific incident is almost silly but basically this one guy is traveling west as his wagon as his cows and one of his cows start straying further and further away and by the time he noticed that this is happening the cow has gone into a lakota camp the guy is too scared of american indians to go in and claim it saying hey that's mine but doesn't really want to let it go either so when the cow is found by the lakota they kill him and they kill the cow and eat it but the the guy goes to complain to the closest army fort he can find and he runs into a young officer named gratton who's quite excited at the prospect of having an excuse to be able to flex his muscles so gratton takes about 30 some soldiers with him they go off to this lakota camp and gratton is basically openly threatening them that if they don't give up the person who killed the cow all hell is gonna break loose negotiations turn a little ugly when the lakota say look we'll pay you for the cow we'll give you horses we'll give you blankets you know well let's call it an honest mistake and be done with it but gratton keep insisting that the people who killed the cow need to be given up for punishment things start getting ugly gratton order his troops to shoot on some of the lakota leaders at that point the rest of the lakota close in on gratton and this man and kill them all this first incident sets up the the fighting there will you know really will be some 20 plus years of fighting between some of the tribes on the great plains the lakota and cheyenne in particular versus the united states and it's not going to be you know constant fighting there will be breaks in this but give or take there's this opens what are known as the plains indian wars and they are meaningful they are a big deal they continue for a long time something that will further exacerbate the problem is something that happens in colorado in 1858 gold is discovered in colorado leading to thousands of people wanting to move to colorado for making money in the gold rush most of colorado is in the hands of a few tribes in particular the cheyenne and the arapaho and inevitably things get a little tense when you know basically what happens is it's interesting but you have both sides will accuse one another of being thieves you know the cheyenne and the arapaho will accuse the americans of being thieves for the obvious reasons that the americans are The american settlers will accuse the cheyenne and the arapahos of being thieves because the cheyenne and the arapahos begin to retaliate stealing horses stealing mules doing stuff like that it's almost inevitable that eventually things would turn ugly and by the beginning of the 1860s they do turn ugly as you know retaliation counter retaliation the whole thing starts escalating now when i say the cheyenne it's implying that there's one group and they all share they speak with one mind the reality of tribal politics is that first a tribe like the cheyenne will be made of several different villages who are politically independent even though they you know yes they speak the same language yes they may be related yes they have the same culture yes they have the same religion yes they have the language yes they may be related yes they have the same culture but politically speaking each village is independent so in this one occasion there was one of the cheyenne leaders who was favoring staying at peace with the americans a guy by the name of black cattle decide to visit the governor of colorado and ask to say he basically said look we want to have peace we want to be left alone what can we do the governor wasn't so happy because he had already invested a lot in trying to get open warfare going against the tribes but you know he directs black cattle and his followers to talk with military authorities at fort lyon there the commander tells black cattle look grab this american flag grab this white flag put them up on your tipi go camp over here so you know we know that you are friendly and then all will be good the problem is that in the meantime there's a colorado militia that has been organized by the man by the name of john chivington and chivington was not a big fan of american indians his idea was what do you mean friendly indian and hostile indian they're all indians they all need to go they so despite the fact that some of his own officers advise him against him chivington decide to attack this peaceful cheyenne village at sun creek which is funny because there were other cheyenne villages who were very ready to fight and willing to fight he ends up attacking the ones who are for peace which is sort of silly in a lot of ways by the time chivington and this man attack sun creek you know black cattle is there with his american flag his white flag is telling his people not to panic no don't worry because we'll you know they'll know that we are peaceful chivington doesn't care and proceed to massacre the people in the village the massacre it turns really ugly not only because you have killed a whole bunch of people who are actually some of those trying to vie for peace but also they'll proceed to just chop them to pieces do all sort of mutilations to the body scalp them and go back to denver waving these trophies acquired during the sun creek massacre the result of this is that this diminish tremendously the power of those natives who are vying for peace because the message is you know if a guy like black cattle was a peace chief got to be treated this way by the americans why would we even bother making peace so more and more people begin to fall into the war camp incidentally is interesting because there was a guy by the name of silas soul who refused to he was an officer at sun creek but he refused to let this man shoot on what he knew to be a defenseless village and he's going to accuse chivington of essentially war crimes and it's interesting because soul will then be killed by one of chivington loyalists and it really shows that it shows the complexity of the situation you know sometimes we we think of you know all americans speak with one voice all cheyenne speak with one voice it's not like that there are a bunch of different cheyenne people bunch of different american people who often were very much at odds with one another regarding what was the best course of action to follow in any case the sun creek massacre which took place in 1864 very much spurs tribes such as the lakota and the cheyenne to build an alliance against the united states and so for the next period between 1864 and 1868 the fighting escalate dramatically there's a lot of guerrilla warfare for the following four years sometimes this is referred to as the red cloud war after the name of a particular lakota leader this is probably highly exaggerating the importance of this guy red cloud but nonetheless there's a lot of fighting that take place and it's not going well for american troops it's very hard to change to chase these guys up and down the plains it's very hard even to know where they are going to be next so what happens typically is that natives show up kill a few soldiers they run off they do it again and the soldiers spend a lot of time chasing them around the plains without really being able to catch them there are even some major battles like for example in wyoming the cheyenne and lakota have been harassing this one fort that had been built in the middle of their homeland so every day when the soldiers who go out to cut wood or do other work a few lakota and cheyenne are going to shoot them and run away and in this one occasion this group of lakota and cheyenne will be chased by a larger group of soldiers from the fort but what the small group of lakota and cheyenne were doing was leading them into an ambush where these hundred soldiers or so will be ambushed by over a thousand lakota and cheyenne and will kill them all so long story short this is shortly after the end of the civil war the united states has spent a ton of money on the civil war they don't really want to keep fighting a war that's not going well so in 1868 the united states will agree to sign a second treaty of fort laramie which is extremely beneficial for the tribes because it's saying that not only would the lakota and cheyenne own most of south dakota but they will also have rights to lands in montana north dakota other places on top of it all the forts being built in their homeland will be abandoned and on top of it and even more important none of these land bays can be sold to either the u.s government or to private citizens unless 75 percent of tribal members agree to sign this 75 percent is a huge number because in the past you could you know get a couple of guys drunk say hey your leader signed tough luck you guys now sold the land in saying that they will have to get 75 percent of the whole tribe to agree this is giving tremendously good guarantees to to the native side now the problem with this treaty besides the obvious that in many cases they would translate the parts that were good for the natives and kind of skip over the parts that may not be as good for the natives kind of giving a distorted perception of what they were actually signing but the main problem is the same problem that affects all treaties which is eventually they all get broken and kind of makes you wonder what even is the purpose of signing treaties if you mean to break them and largely what you can gather is that these treaties were signed to buy time you know in a case like this things are not going well the war is not going particularly well so the united states aside why don't we take a break and we can sign a treaty that's very favorable to them so they will sign and we can stop fighting and then when we are ready for it when we have fixed a few other things we need to worry about we can go back break the treaty and start a war which is exactly what's going to happen because this treaty that was supposed to last forever and in real time in reality ends up being about six years having said all that the united states even six years later will have to deal with a real problem which is how do you beat an enemy that you cannot find because you know they don't give battle when you want they are not going to lay out on a field and just be ready they are highly nomadic they are hard to catch the first round of war with these guys hasn't really gone super well so what can you do to beat them so we're gonna stop this lecture right now kind of with this first phase of the wars on the great plains between the lakota and cheyenne and the united states we'll pick up where we left off but for today that's good enough thank you guys for listening and i'll catch you in the next one