

# OLD MINING TOWNS

## KEELER AND DARWIN

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In 1883 the Carson and Colorado Railroad was built from Belleville, Nevada, across the White Mountains to Benton and down into the Owens Valley where the rail line ended in the town of Keeler.

With the coming of the railroad, large marble quarries were opened near Keeler, producing a material which tests proved to be stronger in crushing resistance than any other known. Ultimately the material was used for finishing the Mills Building in San Francisco and the floor at the Los Angeles Airport.

The arrival of the rail line and stagecoach in Keeler was a great event. Passengers came in on the evening train twice a week to take the stage on the following day to Mojave. Passengers spent the layover at the Lake View Hotel, later the name changed to the Hotel Keeler. The hotel burned down on March 19, 1928.

300 people lived in or near the town of Keeler in the 1880's, most of them miners who lived in tents, caves, rockwall wind breakers and a few in cabins.



Darwin was founded in 1874 and in 1877 the population was 45,000 about the same as Los Angeles in that same year. There were 20 saloons on the main street and all disputes were handled by the "Constable", Mr. Colt. An interesting piece of history has to do with an infamous California outlaw know as Three-fingered Jack, who was killed in Darwin.

The town has been burned out by fire on three separate occasions. Only one of the original buildings still stands today. Seven miles west of Darwin in Old Fort Coso, was the site of 3 different massacres of settlers by indians. Two miles farther west is the old gold camp of Coso, which flourished in the late 1850's and the early 1860's. Three miles away is Cole Springs, where Mexicans took out millions of dollars in gold. Thirteen miles from Cole Springs in Kings Canyon, historic petroglyphs are found. This area is now restricted.

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