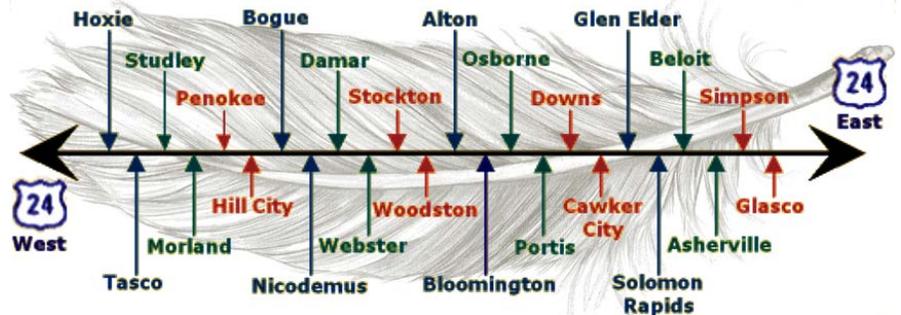
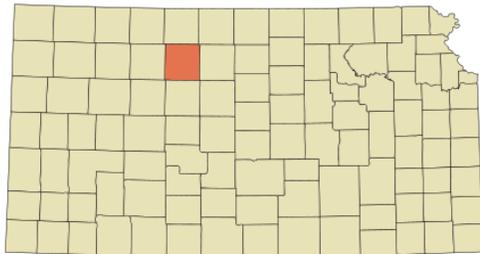




## Damar, Kansas

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## A Brief History of Damar

by Roger Hrabec

On October 8, 1884, President Grover Cleveland signed the document which entitled Francis St. Peter to 160 acres of land on the western edge of Rooks County for the consideration of \$4.00. Francis St. Peter had hauled ammunition during the Civil War and, like so many other veterans, was lured to seek the free land made available by the Homestead Act.

Almost immediately, other French-Canadian Catholics followed. They came west looking for cheap land and a new home. Among the first arrivals were the following family names: St. Peter, Simoneau, Manny, Plante, Hebert, Noel, Morin, Kerouac, Beamu, Dussault, Sennesac, Desbien, Saindon, Morel and Berland. The community became so solidly French in character that it was referred to as the "Acadia of the West." It has retained much of its original tradition to this day.

The first church services were held in the home of Ezra St. Peter in 1887. Mr. St. Peter then donated three acres for a cemetery and two acres for a church to the east of his home. The new community was first known as St. Petersville. However, the first post office located about two miles to the northeast was named Ainsworth. When the Union Pacific Railroad passed nearby, the first small frame church was moved to the site of the present church. The post office moved also, to the railroad station. It was at this time that the new town became known as Damar.

Today, the St. Joseph Catholic Church is recognized as one of the most beautiful churches in the area. The building is 128 feet long and 72 feet wide at the transepts. The style is Romanesque. Mr. Brinkman of Emporia was commissioned as the architect. F. K. Rothenberger was chosen as the stone mason with Sidney Browne as the carpenter under the guidance of Fr. S. F. Guillaume who had been appointed as the first resident pastor. Due to hard times, the building was completed in stages. The limestone was quarried at Waldo and shipped to the site. The towers were completed in 1913 and the first mass celebrated in 1917.

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