

# DAMAR

## Established 1888

### Customs

#### Still French Canadians at Heart

Many traditions can be found within the city of Damar. Every year the organizations of the community will come together to celebrate the seasonal traditions of Easter, Christmas, or perhaps a fall fundraiser. The Parish Bazaar, is an annual event held in October to help fund insurance and other expenses for beautiful St. Joseph's Church. Tremendous fun for the entire family, activities include carnival style games with many prizes, a cake walk, food and refreshments.

The surrounding area offers great outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, and camping. Many visitors to the area have admired at the cleanliness of the town. Damar also boasts a progressive school system and major shopping is just minutes away. With all of these features, Damar is truly a place where both young families and retirees alike would enjoy living.

### Commerce / Cuisine

#### Downtown reflects heritage

The Damar downtown buildings, whether occupied or vacant, are wonderfully painted to reflect the town's French Canadian heritage. Take note of some of the windows to see figures that bring the buildings to life.

Several of the downtown buildings have been re-purposed to a different kind of commerce. Where once a retail store may have existed, now a service-oriented business may cater to a more regional clientele. The Damar Historical Community Foundation can give some guidance to visitors as to the history of the buildings and also their current use.

The Damar Cafe is a delightful treat for local residents and visitors to the area. Stop on by for a homemade meal or maybe just a cup of coffee.

### History

#### The Acadia of the West

On October 8, 1884, President Grover Cleveland signed the document that entitled Francis St. Peter to 160 acres of land on the western edge of Rooks



St. Joseph's Catholic Church under construction in Damar during the winter of 1911-1912.

County for the consideration of \$4.00. Almost immediately other Canadian French Catholic people followed.

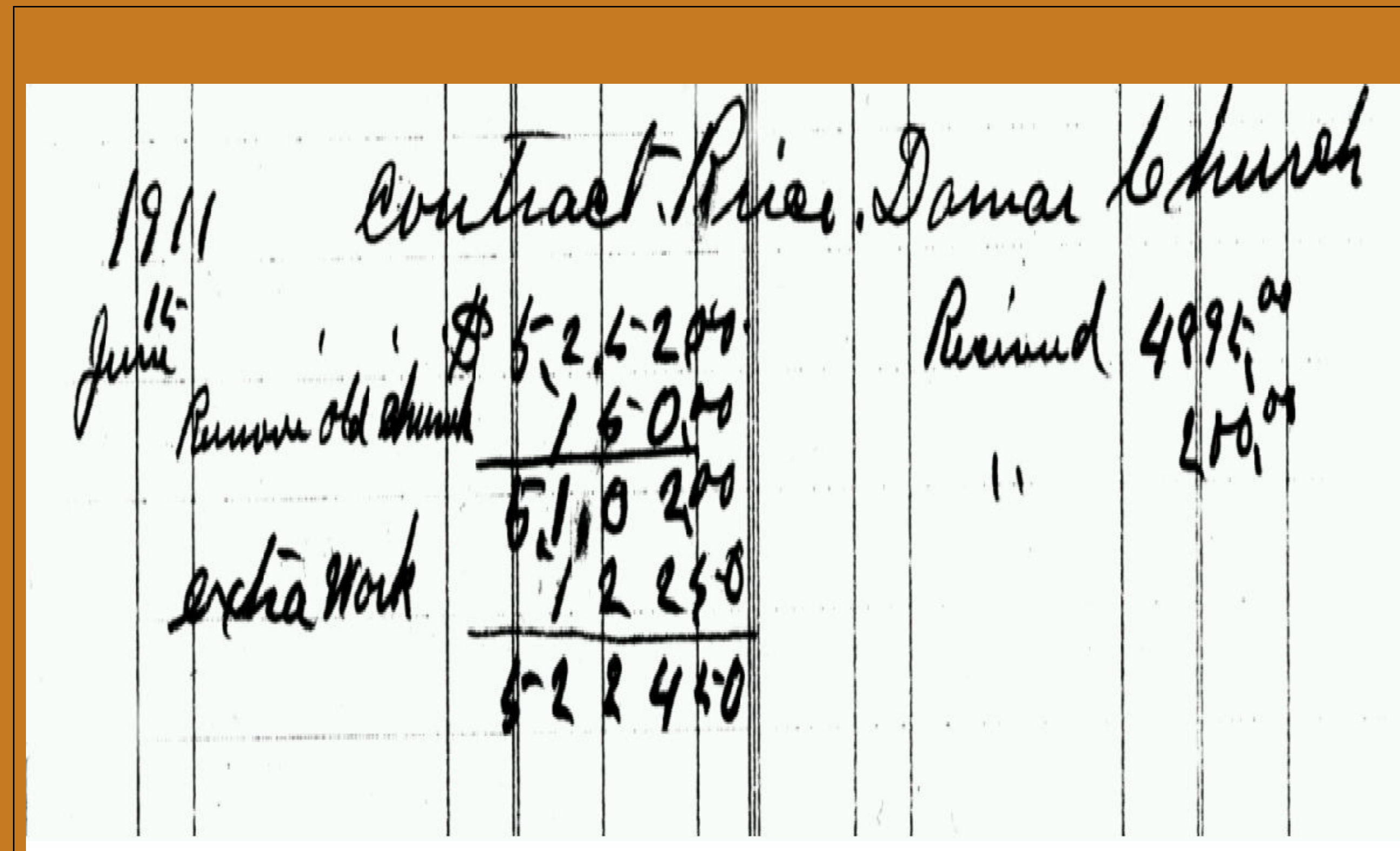
The first settlers arrived in covered wagons drawn by oxen. They came by way of Illinois, then to Concordia, Aurora and St. Joseph and on further to the west looking for cheap land and a new home. The community, first called St. Peter, became so solidly French in character that it was referred to as the "Acadia of the West." It has retained much of its original tradition to this day.

When the Union Pacific Railroad passed nearby in 1888 the first small frame church was moved to the present church site. The post office moved also, to the railroad station. It was at this time that the new town became known as Damar.

### People

#### A Unique Heritage

People of French-Canadian heritage settled Damar in the 1880s. Even today, traces of that culture survive to permeate and enrich this proud community and its environs. Stop by the Veterans Memorial to get a sense of some of the names so familiar to those who live in the area.



Copy of the actual 1911 contract showing the quoted cost of \$5,224.50 to build St. Joseph's Catholic Church between stonemason Franklin A. Rothenberger and the Parish of Damar.

### Geography

#### High On a Hill to the South

Set on the southern edge of the South Fork Solomon River Valley, Damar is located on State Highway 18 and lies just six miles south of U.S. Highway 24. Nearby Lake Webster is just nine miles to the northeast. Coming from the west or the east, Damar and its landmark church can be seen for miles.

### Art / Architecture

#### House of Worship a Must-See

Damar is best known for the beautiful St. Joseph's Catholic Church. The town and the church are on top of a hill that offers a view over many miles of Kansas countryside. The limestone was quarried at Waldo and shipped to the site.

Due to the hard times, the building was completed in stages. Though the towers were completed by December of 1913, it was not plastered until



The Veterans Memorial was erected in 1990 and is a fitting memorial to those who have served our country.

1917 in preparation for the First Mass to be celebrated in the new church. Most all the labor was donated by the parishioners, thereby making such an ambitious project feasible. Inside the church can be seen unusual religious artwork featuring a southwest motif.

Beautifully Romanesque in design, the church dedicated to the honor of St. Joseph stands high on the Kansas plains as a sentinel guarding its flock. Through all these years, everyone who has toiled in town or in the fields did so in the sight of its crosses held high so all could see. The impressive sight has drawn countless pilgrims from the speeding highway to taste of its beauty, to be refreshed by a prayer on their journey, leaving a tribute to those brave souls who made a dream come true.

The church is now on the National Register of Historic Places.