

**Across Oceans, Across Time® ...**  
**Stories from the Family History & Genealogy Center ...**



Boysen Dam and Boysen State Park in the Wind River country of central Wyoming are the legacy of Danish immigrant **Asmus Boysen**. Born in Skanderup, in Ribe County in 1868, the entrepreneurial Boysen came to America around 1886. He met and married Illinois native Anna Leet in Chicago and settled near Gray, in Audubon County, Iowa, in the early 1890s. Over the next decade or so Asmus was involved in banking and other capitalist ventures in northwestern Iowa and also served as Representative in the Iowa General Assembly from 1900-1903.

By this time, however, Boysen's eyes had already turned toward the west. While on a mining exploration trip to Wyoming at the turn of the century he envisioned a dam on the Wind River Canyon that might provide both power for local copper and gold mines and irrigation water for farming. In 1899 he secured a grazing lease on 78,000 acres from local Indian tribes, which he exchanged for clear title to 640 acres in 1905. Moving his family to the nearby town of Shoshoni, he financed construction of a concrete dam at the mouth of the Canyon in 1908 at a cost of \$2,000,000. The 710kw power plant operated until 1923, when a flood caused the lake behind the dam rise, inundating the tracks of the Burlington Northern Railroad. The railroad sued Boysen for damages. Boysen lost the lawsuit, and part of his dam was blasted away to prevent future flooding. It continued to generate power until the early 1930s; the remaining dam was dismantled in 1948. Parts of it can still be seen on the cliff wall adjacent to tunnels at the north end of the Lower Wind River Canyon.

Although his dam and fortune were lost, Boysen's vision endured. A new dam was built slightly upstream from his in 1952, and it and the adjacent recreational area were named for a Danish immigrant who dreamt big.