



# **Van Wagner Songbook**

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Last Updated: 8/13/2025

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# Van Wagner Songbook Vol. 1: Campfire Classics and Deep Cuts

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Photo Credit: Steve Patterson  
Last Updated: 11/25/2020

# Bridges Burned (Tioga County)

## Lost in the Mountains

Van Wagner

Sept. 2010

### Verse 1:

G C  
 When I think back to the bridges I've burned  
 D G  
 I try to count the lessons learned.  
 C  
 I drop the count at 34  
 D G  
 Old mistakes, won't you come no more.

### Chorus:

C G  
 I'm standing alone in Tioga County  
 C G  
 No one on my left  
 C D  
 No one on my right  
 G-----Em C G  
 And I've paved every mile of this road that I'm on  
 D G  
 With bridges burned 12,000 nights.

### Verse 2:

Have you been there, have you felt like this?  
 No one but the wind to kiss.  
 Just you, and the hills.  
 All alone standing still.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

You choose your path, you dig your ditch.  
 You make your bed, you sleep in it.  
 You baton down, boots straps up.  
 You forge ahead and bid good luck.

# Churches and Bars

## If Time Could Stand Alone

Tom Flannery and Van Wagner

March 2002

### Chorus:

C G  
Churches and bars  
C G  
Churches and bars  
C D G  
All I need is churches and bars  
C G C G  
Won't find me in a dry old town  
C D G  
Not a drop of religion to be found

### Verse 1:

G Em  
Folks round here don't need many things  
C D  
just the shirt on their backs and a song to sing  
G Em  
Reverend Billy likes his wine  
C D  
turns a feast day into a good old time  
Em D C D  
12 different languages, all speaking his praises  
Em D  
some kneel at church doors  
C D  
some lay on barroom floors

### Chorus

### Verse 2:

Used to be that coal was king  
Round here it could buy anything  
That was yesterday my friend  
So set 'em up till I reach the end  
Communion 7 days a week  
Yuengling to drink, Mrs. T's eat  
Old time religion and lager beer  
That's what keeps me living here

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

Good Lord watches over me  
especially when I'm too blind to see  
Lays my head down oh so slow  
when my stomach does the do-si-do  
So grab your partner swing her round  
to that Pennsylvania sound  
Sing with me just 1 more time  
Before I head down in this mine.

# Crosscut Saw

## Only Passing Through

Van Wagner  
August 20, 2004

### Verse 1:

Am  
The war was over, Mr. Lincoln had won  
G Am  
I drew my navy wages and returned to my home.

Sullivan County where my grandfather came  
C G  
Soil was rocky, the sky always rain.

I remember grandpa's stories of when he was a kid  
Bison in the valleys elk on the ridge.  
Now it's all gone, a new hunt has begun  
To find the Tiadoghton that make the sawmills hum.

### Chorus:

Am  
All I need is a crosscut saw.  
G Am  
A double bit ax and 80 trees to fall.  
C Am  
The spring is coming I can smell it all around.  
C G Am  
My soul's being tempted by that high water sound.

### Verse 2:

Up on the Loyalsock it's straight and it's tall.  
There's Pine up there like you never saw.  
Only brave loggers bare the winter cold.  
Snow falls heavy on the Appalachian fold.

Up in the morning at 5 am  
Thrown down some biscuits, coffee, and ham.  
12 hour shift on the teamster crew  
skiddin' logs to the river in the ice and snow.

### Chorus

**Capo:** 5th fret (live); 3rd fret (album)

### Verse 3:

We lash the logs together with hickory and oak  
No rope nor iron just pins and bows.  
A sweep at the front and back, a shack for the crew  
20,000 board feet ready to tie loose.

When the ice finally breaks and the water's good  
and high.  
We'll head down the Loyalsock our crew of 5.  
3 Days on the raft down to Montoursville  
we hit the Susquehanna waters smooth and still

### Chorus

### Verse 4:

Once we get to Marietta we sell off the logs  
\$100 split by the river hogs.  
We head back north , Walking all the way.  
One hand on your knife, the other on your pay.  
  
If it's a good season we'll have 2 or 3 more runs  
Then the year is over and the summer has begun.  
I'll watch as rust builds on my tools  
And long for the day I'm back with my logging crew.

### Chorus

# Good Thing

## Started With a Board

Van Wagner

Sept 26, 2012

G                          D        G  
Gonna play on this guitar all my days

D  
Gonna play on this guitar all my days

Em C G D G  
Oh Oh short or long I got a good thing going on.

Gonna live on this mountain all my time (2x)  
Oh Oh short or long I got a good thing going on.

Gonna swim in this river when I feel (2x)  
Oh Oh short or long I got a good thing going on.

Gonna live my wife all my life (2x)  
Oh Oh short or long I got a good thing going on.

Gonna live with this cat while I can (2x)  
Oh Oh short or long I got a good thing going on.

Gonna write what I feel that's the deal (2x)  
Oh Oh short or long I got a good thing going on.

Gonna keep making friends till the end (2x)  
Oh Oh short or long I got a good thing going on.

Gonna play this guitar  
Live on this mountain  
Swim in this river  
Love my wife  
Gonna live with this cat  
Write what I feel  
Keep making friends.  
Oh Oh short or long I got a good thing going on.

# In a Song

## A Mountain Man's Dream

Van Wagner

Oct 25, 2015

F                      C  
 When another day is done  
 G                      Am  
 You're asking what went on  
 F                      C                      G  
 A song comes on comes on.

Change is the only norm  
 You keep on keeping on  
 In a song keeping on keeping on.

The fog of the morning rolls  
 The night takes it's toll  
 A song moves it on moves it on.

A friend tells you of the news  
 But what else is new  
 A song keeps it true keeps it true.

You hit your lowest low  
 How much lower can it go  
 A song let's you know let's you know.

You soar your highest soar  
 Higher than you've been before.  
 A song lifts you more lifts you more.

Love will take you in  
 If you're wise you'll let it win  
 Love song in the wind in the wind.

# North of 80

## North of 80

Van Wagner  
Summer 2001

C Intro

### Verse 1:

F                      G                      C  
When Armstrong stepped on the moon  
F                      G                      C  
America stepped with him too.  
F                      G              Am      F  
But the giant leap left some behind,  
F                                      G  
Buried in the foothills of time.

Not much has changed here today,  
Prosperity never seems to stay.  
100 miles off the map,  
But we all know exactly where we're at.

### Chorus:

                F                      C  
North of 80 it ain't the same.  
                F                                      G  
I don't know how else to put it to explain.  
                F                      G              C  
There's a different tune in the air  
                G  
There's a northern feel,  
  F                      C  
that makes it real everywhere.

**Capo:** 2nd fret (album)

### Verse 2:

Pennsylvania's hard to call.  
Not just one shoe fits us all.  
7 worlds all in one  
Sharing nothing but the air and the sun.

The truth is most folks don't see  
Much more than the southern tier.  
Harrisburg to Philly and out to the West  
But they forget about the part where I fit best.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

So next time you're on the road  
And feeling shaky in your soul.  
Take your watch and throw it away  
Come up North just for a day.

Once your life learns to breathe  
You'll find it so hard to leave.  
Don't be surprised if your tracks disappear  
And you're surrounded by a future up here.

### Chorus

# Rattlesnake

## The Fringe

Van Wagner  
August 24, 2013

**Capo:** 2nd or 4th fret depending on  
size of snake (live); None (album)

### Verse 1:

Am F  
There's all kinds of snakes that live in these  
mountains  
Am F  
They slither by rivers they fall into fountains  
C G Am E  
They do it all without arms and legs  
Am E Am  
Truth much stranger than fiction..

I've heard that Saint Patrick Cast them away  
He drove the serpents right into the Bay  
There's just one flaw with the Saint Patrick Tale  
There were never no snakes in Ireland.

### Chorus:

C G  
Oh Rattlesnake I've seen you before  
Am F  
I'm gonna see you again  
C G  
I go back and forth from fear to respect  
Am F  
But it's fear in the end.

### Verse 2:

Of all my rattlers only one tried to bite me  
I think deep down he didn't want to fight me  
Just passed my leg then he made me aware  
Some timbers not for cutting.

I've moved quite a few off of route 44  
Between route 6 and old Jersey Shore  
A snake in one hand and a motorcycle band  
Reminds you that you're still with the living.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

So to all who travel throughout Penn's  
Woods  
If you're lucky to see one respect it  
you should.  
Please don't harm it just let it be  
The only good snake is a live one.

### Chorus



# Something Out In the Dark

## Flat Bottom Town

Van Wagner  
1999

**Capo:** None (live); 2nd fret (album)

### Verse 1:

C                                  G                                  Am ----- F  
I have a friend from the south of the state, he's your everyday Joe.

C                                  G                                  Am ----- F  
He lives his life, day by day and he travels a broken road.

C                                  G                                  Am ----- F  
All his life, he's never believed in something that he could not see.

C                                  G                                  Am ----- F  
He said if God is real, then where is he now, amidst all my (this) misery.

**Chorus:**

Am---F                      Am---F  
When the world has run you through  
Am---F    Am---F  
That doesn't mean, he's turned his back on you.  
Am---F                                      Am---F  
Can't you believe and trust your heart.  
Am---F                                      Am---F  
That there's something, out in the dark.

### Verse 2:

I kind of feel for people like that and the lonely paths they've chose.  
The only reason they can't see God is because their eyes are closed.  
In the breath of a song, or a night gone wrong his presence is through and through.  
If you want to see God then just look in the eyes of the person right next to you.

## Chorus

### Verse 3:

We've got to stop living our lives, just expecting more and more  
And start living like miracles, which is exactly what we are.  
You've got to build your life on faith if you want to get off the ground,  
Because a sea of apathy's a perfect place for any good soul to drown.

## Chorus

Ollie and Van Wagner  
January 13, 2009

**Capo:** 5th fret (album)

G C G  
Up on the mountain you can see it from the road

D C G  
A field a rocks where nothing seems to grow.

G C G  
Dad told me that's the spot on the hill

D C G  
Where the bears come to dance when the moon is filled.

G D  
Where they Dance. Where they Dance.

When the bears dance the world is asleep.  
When the bears dance the stomp out all the trees.  
Paws and claws dust from the pines.  
Bellies full of berries and true moonshine.

If you're out camping for an overnight stay  
And you wonder from your tent and see the bears play.  
Don't take no photos to prove what you saw  
Just join in the good times and stomp with them all.

## Chorus

# You Can't Lock up a Good Guitar

## The Flood Sessions: Four Days of Rain

Van Wagner  
October 12, 2011

**Capo:** 5th fret (album)

### Verse 1:

G C G  
There's something about a good guitar  
C D  
I know other pickers know what I mean.  
G C G  
When you've got a soul to lay out  
C D  
There's nothing like a good six string  
Em  
A good six string

G C G  
I think about the one I learned on  
C D  
Borrowed my brothers Epiphone.  
G C G  
Years later his church was robbed  
C D  
They took that guitar, doors unlocked.  
Em  
Doors unlocked.

### Chorus:

C G D Em  
No You Can't Lock up a good guitar  
C G D G  
No You Can't Lock up a good guitar

### Verse 2:

Guitars are meant to be played  
Strummed and picked every day  
It's true they get better with age.  
The tone mellows out and finds its way  
It finds its way.

I remember Uncle Scott  
left a guitar on one of his stops.  
An outside cat peed all over it  
Mom threw it on the fire pit  
On the fire pit.

### Chorus

Years from now  
when my pickin's through  
with all these guitars what'll I do?  
I'll give them all to my sons  
I hope they play em' or pass them on  
Pass them on

### Chorus



# Van Wagner Songbook Vol. 2: Rivers & Trees

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Photo Credit: Steve Patterson  
Last Updated: 11/25/2020



# Waterfall

## Ash to Ash

Van Wagner

August 30, 2014

**Intro:** Em G D Em x4

### Chorus:

Em G D Em  
 The power of a waterfall  
 Em G D Em  
 Water runs from the mountains tall.  
 Em G D Em  
 Take in some, take in all  
 Em D Em  
 The power of a waterfall.

### Verse 1:

D G Em  
 A mystic thing, foggy air  
 D G Em  
 Between 2 mountains there's nothing there.  
 D G Em  
 Water waiting to be rain  
 D G Em  
 Down the valley like a train.

### Chorus

### Verse 2:

These mountains once locked in ice  
 Squeezed in a glacial vice.  
 When the melt formed new streams  
 It bashed through boulders and carved ravines.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

There's famous ones like Niagara Falls  
 Quiet ones like the seven tubs  
 And though the drive takes awhile  
 My favorite is Ohionpyle.

# Ash to Ash

## Ash to Ash

Van Wagner

December 22, 2014

### Chorus:

Am            G            Am  
 Ash to ash and dust to dust.  
 C                            G        Am  
 Wood to splinters and iron to rust.  
 Am            G            Am  
 Ash to ash and dust to dust.  
 Am            G            Am  
 Ash to ash and dust to dust.

### Verse 1:

          F                    G                    Am  
 My dad taught me of many trees.  
   F                            G        Am  
 The Oaks, the Pine, and Hickories.  
 C    G        Am  
 He taught me the Ash but I paid little mind.  
 Am    G        Am  
 A common tree with a simple line.

### Chorus

### Verse 2:

Here I live in 2014  
 Not an Ash alive left for spring.  
 A beetle has come, the Ash is no more.  
 They all will fall from the emerald borer.

### Verse 3:

I sit here now on a floor of Ash.  
 Rocking chairs and baseball bats.  
 Hard to believe they'll soon be gone.  
 Just a few years ago they were so common.

### Chorus

### Verse 4:

I tell my boys "take a look at that stand"  
 By the skate park on St. Mary's land.  
 They've painted an X on every tree.  
 They'll all be gone in a matter of weeks.

### Verse 5:

I'm not high and mighty, I've got no horse.  
 Ain't pointing fingers just strumming chords.  
 I'm saying out loud I can't believe.  
 I'm gonna out-live these trees.

### Chorus

### Outro:

Ash to ash and dust to dust  
 Ash to ash and dust to dust

# Started With a Board

## Started With a Board

Van Wagner  
July 11, 2012

### Verse 1:

Am  
Some floods come from water  
Some just come from life  
Dm Am  
No matter what kind of flood you face  
E Am  
You need a boat to survive.

Lord Said to Noah  
There's gonna be a flood.  
Go round up all those critters  
Get em' out of the mud.

### Chorus:

Am  
And it started with a board  
Just a piece of Pine  
And it started with a board  
E Am  
And it ended fine.

The biggest things in life  
Gotta start small  
You start with a board  
and you build it tall.

### Verse 2:

Crossing a great ocean  
Coming to America  
Some by choice some by chains  
Building a new world.

Nina Pinta Santa Maria  
Just a few of the thousands that came  
The greatest country there ever was  
Built by every race.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

Iron tracks and wooden ties  
Transcontinental lines.  
The World had never seen a railroad  
Cross a nation wide.  
Promontory Utah  
The day that East met West  
The greatest railroad that ever was  
A golden spike on the crest.

### Chorus

### Verse 4:

Batter up the umpire said  
He dusted off the plate  
Up stepped the great Hank Aaron  
And beat the record set by the Babe.  
Cal Ripken Jr.  
Ernie Banks, Willie Mays.  
Great plays by the greatest players  
Greatest game ever made

### Chorus:

And it started with a board  
Just a piece of Ash  
It started with a board  
The pitches come fast  
The biggest things in life  
Gotta start small  
You start with a board  
And you build it tall

### Verse 5:

The screams of Jimi Hendrix  
The soul of B.B. King  
The acoustic sound of Woody Guthrie  
Frailing on the strings  
All of the great music  
Guitars strumming chords  
From silent night to rock n' roll  
They all started with a board

### Chorus

# Be A Tree

## Be A Tree

Van Wagner

June 8, 2006

### Chorus:

D        A    D        A  
 If I could be anyone but me  
   G    A            D  
 I wonder who would I be.  
 D            A    D        A  
 If you could be any type of tree  
   G        A            D  
 Tell me, what would you be?

### Verse 1:

G                            D  
 Maybe the white Pine tall among the rest  
   G                            D    A  
 Been called the king of the forest.  
   G                            D  
 Or a solid Hickory won't bend before a break  
 Bm                            A  
 One thing's for sure trees make no mistakes.

### Chorus

### Verse 2:

Oh the Hemlock yeah I'd take that  
 I'd cool off the trout streams up on Cherry Flats  
 While on the Cherry well that won't be bad  
 Highest dollar in the woods maybe I oughta  
   rethink that

### Chorus

### Bridge:

E----F#-----G  
 Are you solid where you are  
   E----- F#---G  
 Like the spruce in this guitar  
   E-----F#---G----A  
 I bet you've got a tale to tell

### Verse 3:

Oh goodnight Locust adios American Elm  
 A moment of silence for the Chestnut and it's  
   realm  
 Tomorrow's bringing those Shadberry blooms  
 These woods are calling, calling home to you.



# Shagbark Hickory

## Shikellamy

Van Wagner

August 2007

**Intro: Em**

**Chorus:**

Em Am  
The Shagbark Hickory is a mighty hard tree  
B7 Em  
And it grows in the lowlands by rivers and streams.  
Am  
When the snow is falling and the wind blows cold  
B7 Em  
Then the Shagbark Hickory holds it's own.

### Verse 1:

G D  
In the deep dark woods where no one ever goes  
Em  
There's a stand of timber where the Shagbark grows.  
G D  
An open hand in solitude.  
Em  
You'll only be found if you're searching too.

## Chorus

### Verse 2:

Hard times hit and they never seem to stop.  
You're back on the bottom just as soon as you reach  
the top.  
You find yourself standing cause it's all you know to  
do.  
Like that old tree with a grain straight and true.

## Chorus

**Bridge:** Verse Chords x1

### Verse 3:

On the forest floor it might turn to rotten  
wood.  
Or carpenters' hands might work it into  
good.  
As the knife is drawn along the grain.  
This piece of Hickory breathes life again.

## Chorus

# Green Bridge

## Walking the Streets

Van Wagner and Robb Bomboy

July 2000

### Verse 1:

G                                  C                                  D                                  G  
 A shimmer on the river draws my eyes to the bridge  
 C                                  D                                  G  
 Flooded memories as a kid  
 Em                                  D                                  C  
 Eyes on the left side, faith on the right.

### Verse 2:

Countin' pigeons from the pillars below  
 Feeling older as they go.  
 All my life I heard it, but never like tonight.

### Chorus:

C                                  D                                  G  
 And tonight you sing your lullaby  
 C                                  C                                  G  
 Goodnight my ribbon in the sky  
 Bm C                                  D  
 96 years in the blink of an eye  
 G                                  C                                  D  
 Goodnight ribbon in the sky  
 G                                  C                                  D                                  G  
 Goodnight sweet lullaby, goodnight

### Verse 3:

Here I am thinking of the nights gone by  
 Climbing arches in the sky  
 Holding breath as the diesel dared me.

### Verse 4:

Tonight's her song fills the air  
 Hardly half the town cares.  
 She was as strong, as the century.

### Chorus

# River Rat

## River Rat

Van Wagner  
June 8, 2016

**Capo:** 4th or 5th fret

**Intro:** Chorus Chords x1

### **Chorus [Chords x2 Each Time]:**

Em                      G  
Raised up from the river mud  
Am                      C        D  
River rat running in his blood.  
Em                      G  
One thing that was understood  
Am                      C        D  
River rats are up to no good.

### **Verse 1:**

Am  
As sure as the river flows  
Em  
It's something everybody knows.  
Am  
The kids from across the tracks  
Bm  
Everyone of them a river rat.

They learn to swim by the river shore  
Cut off jeans and not much more.  
The lucky ones have a boat  
It gets them where they need to go.

### **Chorus**

### **Verse 2:**

The old men remember times  
When eels were caught on fishing lines.  
Now the fish don't bite so well  
Now they're only catching hell.

Kids down town with nothing to do.  
You can guess what all that leads to.  
Idle hands bring you down  
When there's nothing to do in your town.

### **Chorus**

### **Verse 3:**

Told more than he can count  
A river rat will never amount.  
Written off before age 10  
But nobody checked with him.

He's got dreams of bigger things.  
A Mind that thinks a heart that sings.  
A river rat, that's for sure  
But this one's gonna change the World.

### **Chorus**

# Lightning Tree

Woolrich Coat

Van Wagner

August 28, 2008

**Capo:** 2nd fret

**Intro:** Chorus Chords x2

**Verse 1:**

G                      C              G  
 Let's all agree, there's no time for misery  
 C                      G  
 Is that a deal for you and me?  
                     D              G  
 Let's put the past far behind.  
 G                      C              G  
 If there's a hatchet, can we go bury it?  
 C                      G  
 There's no need to carry it.  
                     D              G  
 Bury yours and bury mine.

**Chorus:**

(F)      (Em)      G  
 Let's go up to the lightning tree  
             (F)      (Em)      G  
 It's time to reconcile  
 (F)      (Em)      G  
 Life's too short for enemies  
                     (D)                      G  
 When you're only here for a while.

**Verse 2:**

What are we proving, holding firmly to that grudge?  
 Don't expect it to ever budge  
 Carried baggage for far too long.  
 Let's try forgiving, let bygones wash away  
 History was yesterday  
 It's time we move along.

**Chorus:**

**Verse 3:**

If not for you, then do it for the Lord.  
 He was never one for the sword  
 He came from the school of peace.  
 It ain't easy, To let go of all of it  
 To forgive and to forget  
 But in peace is victory.

**Chorus**

**Outro:** Chorus Chords x2

# Sit by the River and Dream

## Ash to Ash

Van Wagner

August 2014

**Intro:** G D Em x2  
Verse Chords x1

### Verse 1:

G D Em  
Gonna sit by the river and dream  
G D Em  
Let my soul roll on up with the stream.  
C D G C  
The water, the willow, the maples all green.  
Em D G  
Gonna sit by the river and dream.

Gonna go to the mountains and heel.  
For a day maybe longer if I feel  
Where the bridges are wood and the barns are steel  
Gonna go to the mountains and heel.

### Chorus:

D C G  
Why do I worry  
C G D  
It does, no good, at all.  
D C G  
Why do I hurry,  
C G D  
I burn out, then I fall.  
G D Em x2

### Verse 2:

Gonna pick a direction and walk  
All alone there's no need to talk.  
Follow the call of the red tailed hawk.  
Gonna pick a direction and walk.

Gonna finally lay down for some rest.  
As the Sun goes down in the west.  
I'm tired from my head, to my feet, to my chest.  
Gonna finally lay down for some rest.

### Chorus

**Bridge:** Verse Chords x1

### Verse 3:

Gonna sit by the river and dream  
Let my soul roll with the stream.  
The water, the willow, the maples all green.  
Gonna sit by the river and dream.

**Outro:** Verse Chords x1

# Four Days of Rain

## The Flood Sessions: Four Days of Rain

Van Wagner  
September 8, 2011

**Capo:** 2nd fret (just top 5 strings; low E un-capoed)

### Intro: D

### Verse 1:

G D  
All my life I've heard stories of 72  
G D  
Hurricane Agnes brought the river up to 32, feet.  
C G D  
I thought that record would stand for all my life.  
C G D  
But the river may hit 32 later tonight.

### Chorus:

C D  
The river looks angry after 4 days of rain  
C G D  
She's gonna remind us who's in charge again.

### Verse 2:

We got word this morning to go sand bag in town.  
So we headed over Bald Top road the only road  
around.  
Had to bag a wall from Mahoning Creek.  
By noon a foreman said we built 6 feet.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

People come together in a flood from all walks of  
life  
I saw a banker on my left and county inmates on  
my right.  
If the levee holds then most of town will stay dry.  
But they don't have a levee across the river in  
Riverside.

### Chorus

### Bridge: Chorus Chords x1

### Verse 4:

No one talks about it though it's on all our minds.  
The worst will be the clean up next week some  
time.  
Eventually the mud will dry and town will start  
anew.  
It will just be a legend like the flood of 72

### Chorus

### Outro: Chorus Chords x2



# Van Wagner Songbook Vol. 3: Among these Mountains, Stones, and Creeks

Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner

Photo Credit: Steve Patterson  
Last Updated: 11/25/2020

# Ridge Runner

## The Flood Sessions: Four Days of Rain

Van Wagner  
January 23, 2012

**Capo:** 5th fret

**Intro:** Em---C G D G

**Chorus**

**Verse 1:**

G

Some men love the ocean and spend a life at sea

I need a forest a life in the trees

D

Home is where the heart is, find your heart a good home.

G

D G

My heart is in the woodland, lost and alone.

**Chorus:**

Em-

C

Deep in the woods where the highway can't be heard

G

D

I hear the sound of quiet in the absence of words.

Em

C

Born where I belong I belong there still.

G

D

G

God made me a ridge runner in these rolling hills.

**Intro** (x1)

**Verse 2:**

When I was a young lad my parents told me then

Go out in the woods, find yourself young man

First it was hunt and fish, deeper lessons came.

Here I sit all grown up and I'm searching just the same.

**Chorus**

**Bridge:** Chorus (x1)

**Verse 3:**

The mountains are a mystery the longer you stay

They'll roll their way in your soul deeper each day

Even if you leave they'll remain in your heart

In the way the world sees you and how you and how you  
see the world.



# Bullet Hole

## Ash to Ash

Van Wagner

February 8, 2015

### Intro: Em G (x3)

C Em D G

### Verse 1:

G C  
There's a stone in Clinton County

G  
Where a rifle left its sign.

C  
When I see it, it reminds me

D  
Of a long forgotten time

C  
When market hunters roamed these mountains

G  
Chasing elk, deer, and bear.

C  
The crack of their Winchester  
D G  
Their missed shot is still here.

### Chorus:

Em  
Bullet hole

G  
Just a mark left behind

Em  
Bullet hole

G  
Just a shadow of that day

Em  
Bullet hole

G  
Just a mark to remind  
C Em D  
Life's a close call hey hey.

### Verse 2:

Last night I was pickin'  
With some friends at Ulsh Gap.  
They showed me a Woolrich  
With a hole front to back.

They say this man is still living  
He took a round to the hip.  
Just a hole in a Woolrich  
From a 30.06

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

At the camp where I 1st hunted  
In the kitchen there's spot.  
A man came in from hunting  
And his rifle went off.

The shot went through the ceiling  
Into the bunk room upstairs.  
Just up through the floorboards  
Into a mattress up there.

### Chorus

### Outro: Em G (x3)

C Em  
Life's a close call hey hey.

# Halo Round the Moon

**River Rat**

Van Wagner  
November 15, 2016

**Tuning:** Drop D  
**Capo:** 5th fret

**Intro:** Dm (x2)

**Outro:** Dm

## Verse 1:

Dm

A change in the season, summer to fall

G

Dm

The wind takes leaves in, relentless and raw.

The days are shorter, the night so soon.

F

A

Dm

The frost hangs a halo round the moon.

G

F

Dm

Halo round the moon.

## Verse 2:

A time of migration, ancient herds.

Time to spread wings, millions of birds.

Passenger pigeons, would take to flight.

Wings turned day, into night.

Halo round the moon.

## Verse 3:

Bring on the winter, time stands still

Every cold breath you take in, every brittle chill.

Like a blanket, on everything.

After dark days, comes spring.

Halo round the moon.

## Verse 4:

The spring comes with water, rain upon rain.

The Sun grows bolder, green comes again.

Humans need it, we need to see green.

It washes our souls until clean.

Halo round the moon.

Halo round the moon.

# Sassafras Tea

## A Mountain Man's Dream

Van Wagner

September 6, 2015

### Chorus:

F            C    F            C  
Sassafras Tea, Sassafras Tea  
                 G            C  
From the roots or the leaves  
F            C    F            C  
Sassafras Tea, Sassafras Tea  
                 G                            C  
The nectar of the mountains to me.

### Verse 1:

                 G                            C    F    C  
They say it's bad for you if you drink too much.  
                 G                            C    F    C  
Gallons and gallons a whole bathtub.  
                 G                            C            F    C  
If you drink that whole bathtub they say it's bad for you  
                 G                            C    F    C  
If you drink that much I'd say you have issues.

### Chorus

### Verse 2:

I've always loved, good sweet birch.  
A twig in my mouth when I'm working on work.  
No matter how I boil, no matter how I steep  
I can't make birch into tea.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

Indian Spice Bush, I love that smell.  
The leaves, the berries, they do me well.  
My neighbor Keith made some into brew  
Compared to Sassafras it just won't do.

### Chorus

**Bridge:** F C F C

### Verse 4:

I suppose you could spike it and give it  
some kick  
I prefer it plain just as is.  
When my days are over if you raise a  
glass to me  
I hope that your glass is filled with  
Sassafras Tea

### Chorus

# Ghosts are Real

## Be a Tree

Van Wagner

April, 2006

**Intro:** Em

**Verse 1:**

Em

There's ice in the night air there's rapture in the wind.

C

You can see it in the window glare or aching in your hand.

D

I never said corruption, no mention of deceit

Em

Just acknowledging something I can't hear or see.

C

Em

Ghosts are real boys, ghosts are real.

**Chorus:**

G

Ghosts are real boys, ghosts are real.

D

Am

Em

Make no mistake about it ghosts are real.

G

D

You can call them apparitions call them spirits if you feel

Am

C

Em

Make no mistake about it them ghosts they are real.

**Verse 2:**

So many times I've traveled highways day and night

Both interstates and byways shotgun on my

right

I've learned to accept them when they make their

presence known

What choice do I have when they come rattling

bones.

Ghosts are real boys, ghosts are real

**Chorus**

**Bridge:** Verse (x1)

**Verse 3:**

I know she is here, right now with me.

She's a guardian spirit over my family.

Although her time on Earth was fast as can  
be

I think she's found her quiet and peace.

Ghosts are real boys, ghosts are real

**Chorus**

**Outro:** Em

# Thankful for the Land

## Recluse

Van Wagner  
August 31, 2017

**Capo:** 2nd fret

**Intro:** G C G D

### Verse 1:

G C  
I'm thankful for the land that I have, it gives so much to me.  
G D  
Clean water in the well I drink, clean food to eat.  
G C  
The trees heat my home from cold, 7 months of fire.  
G D  
The trees give me lumber to build, higher and higher.

### Verse 2:

I'm thankful for the woods I share, they give so much to me.  
Venison, the deer I chase berries and seeds.  
The grouse and turkey too, feed my family.  
Squirrel when times are tough, has been a gift to me.

**Intro** (x1)

### Verse 3:

I'm thankful for the streams I have, they give so much to me.  
The bass in summer trout in the spring.  
Crayfish now and then, just right when steamed.  
So much life provided all from the streams.

### Verse 4:

I'm thankful for the sounds I hear music to my life  
Crickets and Cicadas, a katydid choir.  
Coyotes last night right about sundown  
I would not trade an orchestra for nature's sounds.

**Intro** (x1)

### Verse 5:

I'm thankful for the colors I see vivid and clean.  
Shale with it's iron red, trees of forest green.  
The innocence of winters white, everything so still  
Painted with the masters brush, a perfect pastel.

### Verse 6:

I'm thankful for all my friends they  
mean so much to me.  
They're there for me when I need them  
most and also in between.  
Love from the start of life love at the  
end  
I'm thankful for the love I feel that  
comes from good friends.

### Verse 7:

I'm thankful for all these things, they  
give so much to me.

Van Wagner  
July 16, 2011

**Intro:** Bm D (x2)

Bm D  
Never seen it like this in years before.  
Bm D  
Ever since July a dozen or more.  
Bm D  
Perched in that Pine, wings soaking the Sun.  
Bm D  
These Red Tailed Hawks own the land they're on.

Bm                      G    D                      A  
Searching for a sign in this Summer of Hawks.

Bm                      G    D                      A  
Watch as they glide, in the sky they own.

Bm                      G    D                      A  
Shadow on the ground, circling above.

Bm                      G    D                      A  
In this summer of hawks the wind rules the  
woods.

**Intro (x1)**

People often look, for human traits in birds.  
But I often find, their traits in us.  
When it comes to Hawks, there's none in man.  
We borrow their skies and we share their land.

### Chorus, Intro (x1)

Getting near sunset and their tree is bare.  
All the Red Tailed Hawks have taken to the air.  
Night sets in, and dark unveils  
There's a thousand hiding places off the trails.

### Chorus, Intro (x1)

I hold it firm, nature has a plan.  
Every now and then, there's a sign for man.  
I give my word, I'm gonna see this through  
Gonna watch these birds and learn something  
new.

## Chorus

**Outro:** Intro (x2)

**Capo:** 2nd fret

**Outro:** G---Em C D G Em G

# Days Just Like Today

## Going Back to Bald Top

Van Wagner  
August 4, 2000

**Capo:** 2nd fret

## Intro: C

### Chorus (x2)

### Verse 1:

**Outro (Soldier's Joy):** C F C G C F C G C

Am            G            C  
I turn around and I blink

Am            G            C                    G  
I have to laugh as I take the time to think.

Am            G    C  
900 memories all in today

                F            G                    F            G            C  
Doing nothing but nothing, as the daylight burns away.

Started off, in mud up to my knees.  
Tough day for logging but that ain't up to me.  
I got a craving for a chainsaw in my hands  
He says forget about working, let's go pick the banjo  
Van.

**Chorus:**

F C G  
He's playing Soldier's Joy like he never has before.

F C G  
There's truth in his smile and mud on the floor.

C F G F G C  
Oh it's days just like today, that make me live life again.

### Verse 2:

Just after noon we head into the woods.  
In the month of August there ain't nothing that feels as  
good.  
He's telling stories about a woman who ate goats,  
In an ocean of ferns we're fishing for cherries and oaks.

Then another storm rolls in  
We fall back to the places we had been.  
Hard apple cider cold and clean.  
With a belly full of venison and a young mind full of  
dreams.



# Lost in the Mountains

## Lost in the Mountains

Van Wagner  
December 15, 2010

**Capo:** 5th fret

**Intro:** G D C G (x2)

### Verse 1:

G                      D C                      G  
A tune for Ricketts Glen, a song from the trail.  
G                      D C                      G  
Water falls when it can, and it freezes when it will.  
Em                      C G                      D  
I've known it all my life, Red Rock blue skies.  
Em                      C G                      D  
There's a truth in these trees, there's a truth that will set you free.

### Chorus:

C    D  
A soul will search the mountains a thousand times or more.  
C    D  
You turn and face the valleys a thousand times over.  
Em    C  
I've seen it up on Montour Ridge and also Ricketts Glen.  
D    G  
You must get lost in the mountains to find your way again.

### Verse 2:

It happened to my dad, it was the Loyalsock trail.  
He helped us hike to our camp, then he returned to the trail.  
He set out all alone, his flashlight shining low.  
Just him and the dark, a faint highway sound led him to his car.

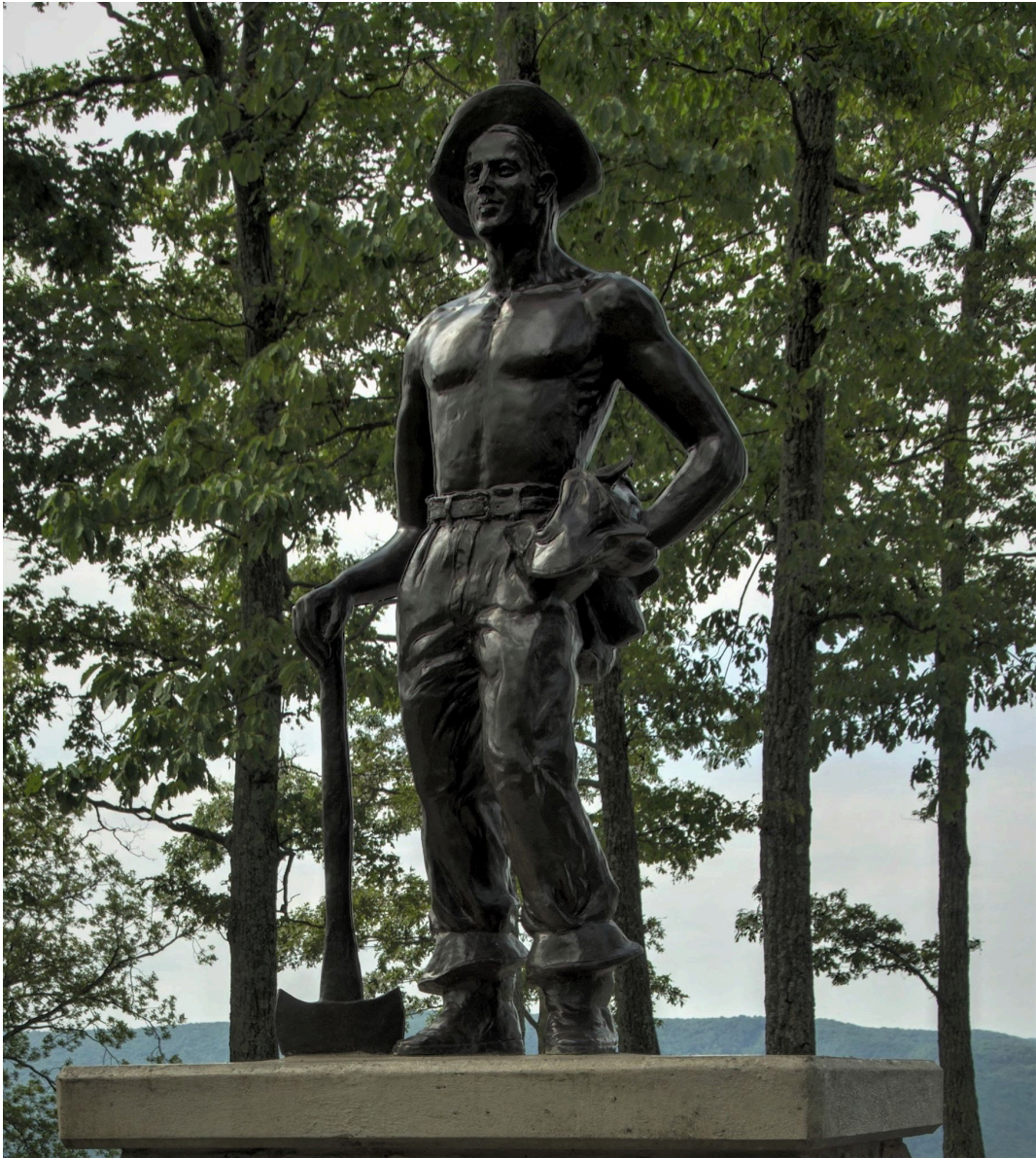
### Chorus

**Bridge:** Verse (x1)

### Verse 3:

I know it's in the cards, comes a time I'll be off track.  
But some time in the woods, is bound to bring me back.  
I'll set course to be lost, I'll find a creek never crossed.  
I'll set my mind at ease, surrounded by mountains, stones, and creeks.

### Chorus



# Van Wagner Songbook Vol. 4: Coal, Wood, Ore, & Lore

Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner

Photo Credit: Steve Patterson  
Last Updated: 11/25/2020

# Devil's Featherbed

## Lost in the Mountains

Van and Ollie Wagner  
March 2010

**Capo:** 3rd fret

**Intro:** Em  
Em G A G Em (x2)

## Chorus

**Verse 1:**

Em                      G                  A  
Not far from the edge of town

G       Em  
There's a rocky pit to the underground.

Em                  G                  A  
No map will ever get you there.

G       Em  
Backwoodsmen know that empty air.

I've seen it with my own 2 eyes  
It's filled with snakes and dark sunlight.  
100 yards of rocky field  
only serpents find comfort there.

**Bridge (x1)**

**Verse 3:**  
40 days he came to Christ  
Tempted him with his spite  
Then he tested Judas too  
Don't let him try his tricks on you.

Where trouble lays it's broken head  
Temptation fires are fully fed  
It's home to fear, home to dread  
It's the lonely Devil's Featherbed

### Chorus (x2)

**Chorus:**  
Em B7  
It's full of emptiness rattlers and copperheads  
C B7 Em  
Don't go after dark to Devil's Featherbed

**Outro:** Intro (x1)

**Bridge:** Em B7 C B7 Em  
Em G A G Em

**Verse 2:**  
Rocks of icy cold sandstone  
The lichens grow all alone.  
The wind will rob you to the bone.  
I've spent the night almost alone.

Just my dog by my side.  
A sleepless night by the fire.  
There's not enough Oak in this world  
To warm that air and cure that cold.

# Hard Coal Navy

## Woolrich Coat

Van Wagner  
August 23, 2008

**Capo:** 2nd fret (album)

**Intro:** Am C D F Am

### Verse 1:

Am C  
On the banks of the river, rusting away.  
D F  
A barn red coal barge is all that remains.  
Am C  
It hasn't touched the water except for a few floods.  
D F Am  
It's loaded with river coal and Susquehanna mud.

Up in Wyoming Valley Nanticoke and East  
The collieries washed anthracite in the rivers and the  
creeks.  
Some coal was lost to the river, washed downstream  
and west.  
It settled in drifts like snow behind a fence.

### Chorus:

G Am  
The hard coal navy hasn't sailed for years.  
F Am  
Quiet are the engines and the old paddlewheels.  
G Am  
They know it's still down there they feel it in their souls  
F Am  
The captains still longing to go dredging for coal.

### Verse 2:

There were hundreds of barges when dredging was at  
its peak  
Harvesting coal that would have washed out to sea.  
Loaded on conveyer and rounded like a beet.  
Sold up and down the river for cookstoves and heat.

They've all left the river now, the regulations strict.  
The pages of paperwork have just grown too thick.  
Perhaps it's for the best, for the health of the stream.  
But I must admit I miss that old paddlewheel fleet.

### Chorus

**Bridge:** Intro (x1)

### Verse 3:

Sometimes with my family we head out in  
the waves.  
A 5 horsepower Johnson on the river for the  
day.  
Galvanized buckets are waiting in the haul.  
We pick the banks by hand that same river  
coal.

### Chorus

**Outro:** F Am

# Shortleaf Pine

## Shortleaf Pine

Van Wagner

August 27, 2018

### Intro: Bm A G Bm

Bm A G D

### Verse 1:

G D  
15 years hunting Ginseng  
G D  
All these years not a one  
G D  
Then on the trail at Ricketts Glen  
Bm A  
I almost stepped on one.

A Hellbender in the mountains  
They're out there hiding in these streams  
Believe me these things are out there  
It's my fault if they go unseen.

### Chorus:

Bm A G  
Some things are scarce  
Bm  
And hard to find  
Bm A G  
Sometimes right before your eyes  
D  
There's a Shortleaf Pine

### Bridge: Bm A G D

### Verse 2:

Oh the Pennsylvania Bobcat  
They've seen you with eyes and ears  
If you're lucky you'll spot one  
Just as quick they'll disappear  
  
Rattlesnakes in Montour County  
40 years to just see one  
Some people fear what they don't understand  
And they kill them with their guns

### Chorus

### Bridge (x1)

### Verse 3:

From here to Alabama  
The land of the Shortleaf Pine  
Like the period of a sentence  
Pennsylvania is the end of the line.

So I rambled over these mountains  
I had to find one on my own.  
When I finally found one  
It was 100 feet from my home.

### Chorus

### Outro: Bridge (x1)

# Dunnawetter

## Walking the Streets

Van Wagner and Matt Harrison  
June 2004

**Capo:** 2nd fret

**Intro:** G (x4)

### Verse 1:

G  
Every time I'm in Sunbury the rain's a coming down.  
D  
Winds pick up, thunder rolls around.  
Em C  
The air gets cool as day turns to night  
G  
Lightning crashes what a powerful sight.

### Chorus:

Em C G D  
Oh Dunnawetter, the fields are turning green.  
Em  
It's the life of the land  
C  
From God's own hand  
G D  
Making it pure and clean.

**Bridge:** Intro (x1)

### Verse 2:

Miles of water coming down today  
Miles more headed towards the Bay.  
The Old Chesapeake up to the brim  
Back in the North is where it begins.

### Chorus

**Bridge:** Intro (x1)  
Verse (x1)

### Verse 3:

From the top of the mountain on Mile Hill  
Road  
See the storm brewing in the valley below  
The wind picked up, the leaves came  
down  
The storm so close you could touch it  
from the ground

### Chorus

**Outro:** Intro (x1)

# The Winds of Idaho

## The Pickle Barrel

Van Wagner

September 2002

### Intro: D A D

G D

### Verse 1:

D A D

I woke up to the sound of coyotes

G D

And the sight of the Sawtooth range.

A Bm

The smell of sage and sawdust

G A

Idaho in a morning rain.

D A D

A logging camp outside of Stanley

G D

Salmon River between the plains

A Bm

This ground is hard and dusty

D A D

The work is just the same.

### Chorus:

G D

As fall sets in on the Aspen

Bm A

The Lodgepole waiting for a snow.

G D

I can almost feel myself changing

A D

With the winds of Idaho

### Bridge: D A D

### Verse 2:

We're skidding Fir, we're skidding Lodgepole

We're setting chokers on the bull line.

Every few hours we hit the coffee

It's been steepin' on the fire.

That's how it is Pacific logging

But no 2 days are the same

Something new in every holler

This land is far from tamed.

### Chorus

### Bridge: D A D

G D

A Bm

G A

### Verse 3:

Soon the snow will cut our season

And rust will take our chains.

Soon we'll be leaving

Pack up camp, head home again.

But I'll keep a bag of fresh sawdust

For cabin fever setting in

I'll close my eyes and smell the forest

And breath in the Idaho wind.

### Chorus

### Outro: D A G D

# Cold Wind

## If Time Could Stand Alone

Van Wagner and Matthew Harrison  
1996/1997

**Intro:** Am  
Dm Am  
E Am

### Verse 1:

Am Dm Am  
It's mighty dark outside, it's mighty dark outside,  
Dm Am E Am  
It's mighty dark outside lord lord, there's a cold wind blowin' tonight.

The cold rain's coming on in, the cold rain's coming on in,  
The cold rain's coming on in lord lord, there's a cold wind blowin' tonight.

**Bridge:** Intro (x1)

### Verse 2:

The fire's burning low in here, the fire's burning low in here,  
Fire's burning low in here lord lord, there's a cold wind blowin' tonight.

My blankets all got holes, my blankets all got holes,  
My blankets all got holes lord lord, there's a cold wind blowin' tonight.

**Bridge:** Intro (x1)

### Verse 3:

It's time I rest my weary bones, time I rest my weary bones,  
Time I rest my weary bones lord lord, I pray that cold wind don't blow.

**Outro:** Intro (x1)



# 83lb Hammer

## Recluse

Van Wagner  
February 2017

**Tuning:** Drop D (album) or capo on 2nd  
fret of top 5 strings (A D G B E)

### Intro: D

G  
A D

### Chorus:

D  
3 pounds of wood, 80 pounds of iron  
G F D  
3 pounds of wood, 80 pounds of iron  
A G D  
In a shower of sparks swimming in fire

### Verse 1:

A G D  
You may have seen rollers, you may have seen a press  
A G D  
But you never have seen a hammer like this.  
G  
I swing it all day at the rolling mill  
D A D  
It takes a mighty hammer to straighten a rail.

### Chorus

**Bridge:** Intro (x1)

### Verse 2:

It takes 2 of us to lift 1 rail.  
Over 400 pounds we can do it well.  
We know we're being watched, we take pride in our work.  
I can show them all what an iron man is worth.

### Chorus

**Bridge:** Intro (x1)

### Verse 3:

There's puddlers there's helpers there's  
others on shears  
There's no such thing as an easy job  
here.  
I've found my place in this rolling mill  
Swinging my hammer on these t-rails.

### Chorus

**Outro:** Intro (x1)

# Leatherman

## Going Back to Bald Top

Van Wagner, Matt Harrison, and Karl Shellenberger  
August 2000

**Capo:** 2nd fret (album)

### Intro: C

### Chorus

### Verse 1:

C G  
The Leatherman is your best friend on your journey through life,  
C  
With it's trusty pliers and its razor sharp knife.  
G  
The handle won't fall apart like the generic brands  
C  
There's only one true American Leatherman.

**Outro:** Chorus (x1)

### Chorus:

F C  
All the ladies know that this tool's for real  
G C  
Made of the finest steel, just see how it feels  
F C  
When you break a string while you are out performing  
G C  
To pull out the peg, reach down to the top of your leg.

**Bridge:** F C  
G C

### Verse 2:

Have you ever been stuck in your harmonica holder?  
And you couldn't get it loose with a 2-ton boulder.  
Just take that trusty tool to that stubborn bolt,  
And you'll bust out of that holder like a wild colt.

### Chorus

**Bridge** (x1)

### Verse 3:

When you're on a date and the night is to its end.  
And she walks you to the door and she invites you in.  
Don't hesitate, procrastinate just go on in,  
When your stomach gets queasy pull out your Leatherman.

# Chickens Lament

## Be A Tree

Van Wagner  
June 16, 2006

**Note:** Song played in G on album

### Verse 1:

C

It's hard to be a chicken especially on my farm  
The chickens that live here, aren't living very long

Some in the evening some the morning fog  
Some from the weasels and some my brothers dog.

### Verse 2:

Scratching in the gravel picking in the mash  
Turn over a rotten log and treat them to the stash

Get them in the morning dodging chicken legs  
Boys you haven't lived until you've had my scrambled eggs

### Verse 3:

We must have lost a dozen to the weasel and the fox  
But I never saw her coming that old Red Tailed Hawk

Take pity on these chickens raise your glasses high  
A toast to my feathered friends before they up and die

### Verse 4:

It's hard to be a chicken especially on my farm  
The chickens that live here, aren't living very long

# Women, Words, and Wine

## Living In Myself

Van Wagner  
Winter 1997/1998

**Capo:** 2nd fret (album)

**Intro:** C G Am G C

### Verse 1:

C G  
Folks ain't the same, down this way  
Am G  
Wish I was back home Susquehanna way.  
C G  
Grinning like a jukebox and spending the whole day,  
Am G  
Trying to remember what I did with yesterday.

### Chorus:

F C  
Seems like I always forget  
Am G  
Something from my past I should regret.  
F C-----Am  
I don't know why but I feel so fine  
F-G C  
Thank God for women, words, and wine

**Bridge:** Intro (x1)

### Verse 2:

What I'd give to be standing in July  
Dancing in a rainstorm with my dad outside.  
As a kid we'd watch the creek rise  
and set sail down the mountainside.

### Chorus

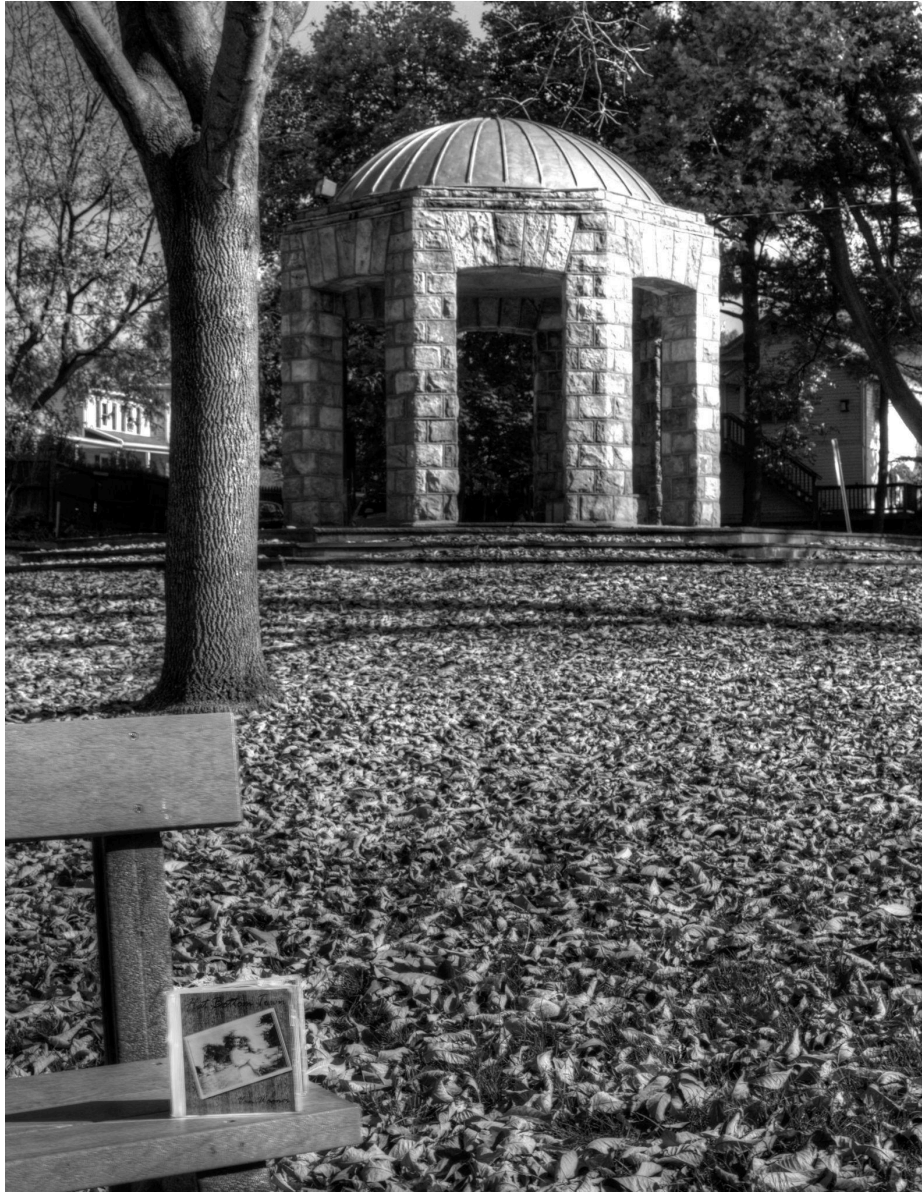
**Bridge:** Intro (x1)

### Verse 3:

The 16th of May found its way into my life  
the days roll past quicker every night.  
In a year I'll be looking back at here,  
Hope her reflection is still shining clear.

### Chorus

**Outro:** C-----Am F-G C



# Van Wagner Songbook Vol. 5: Legends from a Flat Bottom Town

Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner

Photo Credit: Steve Patterson  
Last Updated: 11/25/2020

# Flat Bottom Town

## Flat Bottom Town

Van Wagner

Spring 1998

### Verse 1:

D G  
Well, just about an hour's dream from here  
D G  
Only 40 winks away  
D G A  
There's a town on the river banks that'll carry you  
away.

### Chorus:

G---A D  
I'm going down to a flat bottom town  
G A  
When the river comes up  
D A G  
And the people they go down  
A D  
Flat bottom town

### Verse 2:

Talked to an old friend today, she stopped by for  
some words  
Talked about a long lost friend who now lives in  
Gettysburg  
We were from the same neighborhood, and we all  
grew up with him  
But he's forgotten where he's from, I guess we're too  
"small town" for him.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

Train still runs day and night, up on the North  
Shore line  
And the clock by the court house is still 10  
minutes behind  
Not much has changed here, except the  
people passing through  
They'll never forget you, the denying is up to  
you

### Chorus

### Instrumental (Verse Chords)

### Chorus

### Verse 4:

Well we're all from somewhere, towns big  
and small  
They may not be perfect, but they've made  
us who we are  
These people and places carry us through  
life  
If you turn your back on them, you're just  
turning out the light.

### Chorus

# Alone and in the Pines

## You Can't Force a Mule

Van Wagner

September 1, 2019

**Intro:** Dm, then verse chords

**Chorus:**

Dm A  
Sitting in the pines alone and in the rain  
Dm G A  
The rain could stop, the Sun could shine and I would  
Dm  
feel the same.

Dm                                  A  
Alone by choice, alone by design  
Dm                  G                  A                  Dm  
I'll sit and play my banjo alone in the pines.

(play verse chords after every chorus)

### Verse 1:

I've been to the city, I'm been to many towns  
I've been to Spain and Scotland and other foreign  
ground.  
I live my life, a stranger no matter where I go.  
The lonesome winds remind me the harder that they  
blow.

## Chorus

Lonesome in my rib cage, lonesome to the core  
The screech owl reminds me I'll be lonesome more.  
The crickets try to calm me but there's really no use  
When a lonesome feeling's got you, it's hard to get  
loose.

## Chorus

I'll drink a bit of pale ale or cider in my glass  
And forget about my feelings until the  
feelings pass.  
Tomorrow is a new day by then I'll be fine  
I'll be sitting with my banjo alone in the  
pines.

**Chorus (x2)**

### Outro: Verse chords

# The Cowboy and the Hippy

## Flat Bottom Town

Van Wagner  
1998

**Intro:** D G A

### Verse 1:

D  
Now the cowboy and the hippy are sitting and  
G-----A  
talking of life.  
D  
And the Cowboy looks up to catch the sun  
G-----A  
sinking to the night.  
D  
He says "that's how it goes...you're up then  
G-----A  
you're down for a while."  
D  
Then the hippy looks up from his drink to agree  
G-----A  
with a smile.

### Chorus:

G D  
It's fountains of dreams and puddles of luck,  
(walk down to C)  
How they stumble through life and never get stuck.  
G D  
Just a cowboy and a hippy too scared to wake up,  
C D  
All they ask of tomorrow is to see the sun come up.

### Verse 2:

The hippy keeps talking about a band he's trying to  
find.  
A bunch of good songs, and guys that can keep  
good time.  
He says "I hear this music in my head every time I  
sleep..  
And it's just a matter of time, before that band finds  
me."

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Verse chords

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

Now the night has set in, and the place is  
ready to close.  
So they gather their things and head outside  
by the road.  
The cowboy tips his hat, and the hippy just  
smiled a goodbye.  
Then both of their eyes were caught by a  
diesel streaming by.

### Chorus

All they ask of tomorrow is to see the sun  
come up



# I'll Take Love

## Started With a Board

Van Wagner

December 12, 2012

**Intro:** First ½ of verse chords

### Verse 1:

D

How many kids never see the stars  
Or their only green is some city park

Em G D

Oh it's not the same

Em G D

Oh what a shame.

To see the sword in Orion's belt  
To share the sky ah how it felt.  
Cold and cool the grass below  
A sky's so clear before the snow.

### Chorus:

A

What a shame

D

What a shame.

G walk down to Em D

To never know a thing of simple things.

If I had the choice to love and lose

G walk down to Em

Or never to have loved

D

I'll take love.

(play intro chords after each chorus)

### Verse 2:

A picnic perch at Lover's Leap  
A mile from the nearest street  
Oh me and you  
On a bed of moss and roots.

A frozen night at the canyon rim  
Black bear saying come join him.  
Oh Tioga wild  
Ah just a child.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

Now we walk to meet our kids  
We hike them home just like I did.  
Oh same woods as these.  
Ah same creeks and trees.

I wish for you these things and more  
A smaller life in a bigger World.  
Oh it's been good to me.  
The sky above and hills of green.

### Chorus (x2)

# Mountain Lion

## Lost in the Mountains

Van Wagner (with help from Luke and Calvin)  
December 30, 2010

**Intro:** Em C D Em (x2)

### Verse 1:

Em

In the time of the Minguas the Andastes

D

There were wolves, there were bears among rocks  
and trees.

C

B7

It was just a fact of life in this land.

But the thing that put fear in the hearts of men was  
the scream of the cat said William Penn  
As he slept in the wilderness as a young man.

### Chorus:

Em

Call them Panthers or call them Catamount

C

Mountain Lions all been hunted out.

D

Em

The stories stay to this day.

C

D

Em

Mountain Lions were never gone some say.

### Verse 2:

Officials say the last was killed

In the 1870's Berks County Hills

Always struck me they ended so far south.

You would think that a place like the northern tier  
Where the forest goes for miles, a true frontier  
Might provide refuge for panthers still around.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Verse chords

### Verse 3:

I've met folks who swear they're here

They've seen their tracks or a hanging deer.

Stashed up on a tree like the lions of Africa.

People who with their very own eyes

Have seen the long tail and heard the cries

Don't try to tell them the cougar's gone from  
Pennsylvania.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** verse chords

**Outro:** Em

# Smokeless Joe

## Flat Bottom Town

Van Wagner

November 1998

### Verse 1:

D  
 Old Smokeless Joe never found the time,  
 G D  
 To cross over the county line.  
 G D  
 He wasn't one of the ramblin' kind.  
 A G D  
 Oh, Old Smokeless Joe.

### Verse 2:

78 years on fertile land,  
 Lost 2 sons back in Vietnam,  
 Now the years run through the hands,  
 Oh, of Smokeless Joe.

### Verse 3:

Then came the banks with their moneybags,  
 Them in suits and Joe in rags.  
 Forced to salute a green back flag,  
 Oh, Old Smokeless Joe.

### Verse 4:

Now he bought a place down in the town,  
 Half an acre of old factory ground.  
 The water from his spigot runs rusty brown,  
 Oh, for Smokeless Joe.

### Verse 5:

Sits at night on his front porch swing,  
 And tries to remember how the wood cocks would sing.  
 The sounds of Danville just ain't the same  
 Oh, to Smokeless Joe.

### Verse 6:

Old Joe died on the first of May,  
 Only thing he owned was a jar of clay,  
 And a beat up bible to show the way,  
 Oh, for Smokeless Joe.

### Verse 7:

Well that old man was a friend of mine,  
 I think about him when I cross the county  
 line.  
 Montour soil was as sweet as wine,  
 Oh, to Smokeless Joe.

**Instrumental:** Verse chords

# Shikellamy

## Shikellamy

Van Wagner

August 25, 2007

## Intro: D

**Verse 1:**

Bm                                  A    Bm                                  A  
Oh the say he kept the peace of the confederacy.  
G                                  D    G                                  D  
He and Conrad Weiser, an unlikely pair of men.  
G                                  D    A                                  G  
They walked to Onondaga ice and snow and wind.  
D  
Shikellamy.

### Verse 2:

Oh he was Iroquois from Shamokin shore.  
I've read he was well spoken in Philadelphia when he  
came.  
He spoke for 6 nations then the fever spoke for him.  
Shikellamy.

### Instrumental: Verse chords

### Verse 3:

Oh so what's it mean today now 3 centuries away  
He help off the bloodshed while British entrenched  
If it weren't for Shikellamy we'd all be speaking French  
Shikellamy.

## Outro: D

# Must've Been My Guitar

## Flat Bottom Town

Van Wagner

August 1998

### Verse 1:

G  
Well it all started back in high school I was playing my  
D  
guitar in class

When the teacher came back to my desk, and this  
G  
question she did ask

"Mr. Wagner what makes you think, that you can get  
D  
away with that?"

I said "your class is boring your voice is annoying and  
G  
you smell like a dead cat!"

Then she sent me down to the principal and told him he  
D  
was a freak

G  
All I know is I ended up with detention for a week...

### Chorus:

Well it must've been my guitar, yea it must've been my  
D  
guitar  
Em C  
Whatever the song it must've been wrong,  
D G  
Yea it must've been my guitar.

### Verse 2:

Then came my senior prom and I went to pick up my  
date,  
But I was busy playing my guitar and I got there three  
days late.  
But I didn't want to hurt her feelings so I took her out to  
Burger King  
But I could only afford a water cause my guitar needed  
new strings.

Well then she had the nerve to dump me,  
and she gave me back the ring  
She never even gave me a reason I guess  
she wasn't ready for the dating thing.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

Then one day I stumbled into college and I  
was playing my guitar in a frat,  
I met one guy named Puker and another  
guy named Rat.  
Well we all had a good time drinking there  
till I asked them what was on tap  
"It's imported triple stout lager bock ale"  
proclaimed my pal Rat  
I said "well I only drink Yuengling, it's what  
you call the working man's beer  
But I suppose that word 'working' ain't  
spoke much around here.  
Well, then they took my cup away from me  
my imported triple stout lager bock ale.  
I suppose Penn State ain't ready for me,  
maybe I ought to try Yale.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** D G D

### Verse 4:

Now I'm driving down the highway with my  
guitar in my hands,  
Just put the car in cruise control and sit  
back and jam.  
I just ran over a Penn dot worker and into a  
Catholic Church,  
I grabbed some bread off the communion  
table and flew out the back porch.  
Now the cops are on my tail and they'll  
catch me if they can,  
You know it just ain't easy being a  
Presbyterian guitar man.

### Chorus

# Be True to You

North of 80

Van Wagner  
June 15, 2001

**Capo:** 5th fret

**Intro:** G D / G C G D G

## Verse 1:

G D  
I just told the truth, a freedom that I rarely knew.  
G C G D G  
It cost me a friend, maybe he was no friend at all.  
G D  
I just strummed a chord, a sound this bar had never heard,  
G C G D G  
They just pointed me to the door, guess I was just singing at  
the wall.

## Chorus:

C G  
There's truth to tell, there's a song to sing.  
D Em  
There's something new, in everything.  
C G  
Not to be cliché, but "seize the day"  
D G  
And be true, be true to you.

(play intro chords at the end of each chorus)

## Verse 2:

Been told I'm awful weird, waste too much time, drink too  
much beer.  
I raise a lot of concern, but I'm just walking my own road.  
Ain't nothing wrong with being yourself, instead of trying to be  
someone else.  
That's the wrong way to go, tell em' Van told ya so.

## Chorus

## Verse 3:

It's true I've got a college degree, I  
went to graduate school so I  
could teach.  
But no matter how I try, I just don't  
look right in a tie.  
Just earned my PhD in diggin' coal  
and cutting trees.  
I'm as happy as can be, A blue collar  
feels good on me.

## Chorus

Yes, be true, be true to you

# You Can't Force a Mule

## You Can't Force a Mule

Van Wagner

October 6, 2019

**Intro:** C E / Am F / C G

### Verse 1:

C  
Raised in the mountains on a family farm  
G C  
His dad taught him how to plow a field.  
C  
He walked behind the plow his hands on the reins  
G C  
He'd plow the mountain side to get it tilled.

He worked in the woods skidding logs with the mules  
Oak and Maple to the sawmill.  
His mules were so smart they would jump out of the way  
If a log got to rolling down the hill.

**Chorus:**

[illegible]

C E  
You spend time with animals  
Am F  
You'll find it to be true  
C  
You can force a horse  
G C  
But you cannot force a mule.

**Instrumental: G C (x2)**

### Verse 2:

He often worked till dark sometimes miles  
from home  
His mules knew their way back to the  
farm.  
He could unhook those mules and let go  
of the reins  
They'd walk home and back to the barn.

He said “man you should’ve seen them  
when we’d give them new shoes  
We’d paint each hoof with pine tar.  
Those mules would trot around feeling  
proud and feeling new  
They were ready to work and work hard.”

## Chorus / Instrumental

### Verse 3:

I've heard it was the same down in the  
mines  
The mules knew the limit they could go  
Some miners tried to trick em' and the  
added one more ton  
Those mules wouldn't even try to pull the  
load.

His working years are over now but his  
memories are strong  
I'm so grateful he told me of his mules,  
We shook hands and parted and I  
grabbed my guitar  
And sang him the mule skinner blues.

### Chorus / Instrumental



# Van Wagner Songbook Vol. 6: Alone

Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner

Photo Credit: Ryan Patterson  
Last Updated: 6/14/2021



# Alone

## Alone

Van Wagner  
February 17, 2004

**Capo:** 2nd fret

### Intro: C

### Verse 1:

C  
Hey Mr. Mason cut me some stone

I'm gonna build me a wall so I can be alone.

F C  
Keep the world on the outside and keep me in.

Dm F C  
I want no one to see the shape I'm in.

### Chorus:

F C  
On my own, to moan and groan, hard as stone, in my tone, alone

F C  
You can call me a grouch 'cause I am in and you are out of my walls.

G C  
But that's how it's gonna be nobody here but me, alone.

### Verse 2:

Take your chisel and hammer in your hand  
Cut me a block as quick as you can  
There's plenty of sandstone on the edge of the field.  
Just grab some river mud to point and seal.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

Don't try to understand there's no one that can,  
except for one lady with a ring on her hand.  
She must have meant it when she said "thick and thin"  
Cause it seems that thin is all it's been.

### Chorus

# I'm from the Mountains and I'm Going to the Sea

## Family Guitar

Van Wagner

July 1, 2020

**Intro:** G D G

### Verse 1:

G                      D                      G  
 This year's been a hard one in the mountains.  
 C                      G  
 It's been a hard one for all.  
 D  
 I'm thankful I can roam, in my forest home  
 G                      C                      G  
 Just hidden in the mountains so tall.

But I find myself thinking of the ocean  
 I guess there's a salty dog in me.  
 It's good to mix it up so I've loaded my truck  
 And I'm headed down to the sea.

### Chorus:

G  
 I'm from the mountains  
 D                      G  
 And I'm going to the Sea

**Interlude:** Intro chords

### Verse 2:

My family left the highlands of Scotland  
 They settled in Caroline  
 Did the best they could making tar from wood  
 In those Carolina pines.

They settled not far from the ocean.  
 They traded highlands for the sea  
 I'd take that trade but for just a few days  
 Then it's back to the mountains for me.

### Chorus

**Interlude:** Intro chords

### Verse 3:

Oh highway 95  
 From Richmond down the Southern line  
 Just what the doctor ordered "south of the  
 border"  
 Pedro, waving me by.

To the land of the palm tree,  
 and trees with Spanish moss.  
 It's foreign to the bone from my Pennsylvania  
 home  
 If I didn't know I'd swear I was lost.

### Chorus

**Interlude:** Intro chords

### Verse 4:

I think it's the essence of nature  
 Both the mountains and also the sea  
 Both of them, feel untouched by men  
 When I'm there it's just nature and me.

I feel it in South Carolina  
 When I see those beautiful pines  
 Amazed every time by Loblolly and Slash Pine  
 I see them and I just feel fine.

### Chorus

**Outro:** Intro chords

# Recluse

## Recluse

Van Wagner  
February, 2017

**Intro:** Em D C (x2)

### Verse 1:

Em G  
It's hard to be present, hard to be sane.  
A C D  
Put yourself out there again and again.  
Em G  
Energy's low anxiety high  
A C D  
Too many people, too many times.

I can bring myself back, back from the edge.  
Refuel my spirit, clear out my head.  
It's all that saves me, in the chaos of life.  
I get it together, I get it all right.

**Chorus:**

[illegible]

### Interlude: Intro chords

### Verse 2:

The working stiff, the working poor.  
You take it all day and come back for more.  
No word of thank you, no word of please  
Get what you can, take it and leave.

I know there's more to it, I know there is good.  
See it in people, I know that I should.  
But I find it exhausting living most days.  
I'm lonely in crowds and nervous on stage.

## Chorus

### Interlude: Intro chords

### Verse 3:

Christ went to the mountains to pray and to think.  
This is the reason that I follow him.  
But then he served people both strangers and  
friends.  
This is the part that I struggle with.

People need people, people just need.  
I need the mountains alone with the trees.  
I'll come back better, a stronger man  
And then when I need it, I'll recluse again.

## Chorus

## Outro: Intro chords

# Confidential Blues

## Family Guitar

Van Wagner  
July 3, 2020

**Capo:** 5th fret

**Intro:** Am E Am (x2)

**Chorus**

**Chorus:**

Am

Got the confidential blues now, feeling pretty low

Dm

Am

I'll keep it to myself now, not much you can know.

E

Am

Not much else to do, got the confidential blues.

**Outro:** Chorus chords

**Verse 1:**

E

Am

Some things aren't for telling, just for you to know.

E

Am

No sense in yelling, you're hurting and it shows.

Dm

Am

You don't need all the details, just keep it to yourself.

E

Am

I can see how you're feeling, your heart is on the shelf.

**Chorus**

**Interlude:** Intro chords

**Verse 2:**

I spent the morning broken, feeling so alone.

The way the day was going, there was no going home.

So I strummed a little guitar, and plucked a string or 2.

Guitars keep secrets, they're confidential too.

**Chorus**

**Verse 3:**

I look out in the woods, I see different shades of green.

I look into the mirror, I see different shades of me.

I carry this burden, in a bundle on my back.

And I play this guitar, confidential and black.

# Life Keeps Trying to Kill Me

## Shortleaf Pine

Van Wagner

April 27, 2018

**Intro: C G (x2)**

### Verse 1:

G D G  
I got blown up in a coal mine working underground  
C G  
The powder went off too close you should've heard the sound.  
C G Em  
It twisted up a hatchet throwing coal and throwing slate  
G D G  
Fate tried to get me but fate was too late.

**Chorus:**

D C G  
 Every day, every day  
 C G D  
 Trying to stay one step ahead of fate.  
 G C  
 Close call after close call each and every way.  
 G D G  
 Life keeps trying to kill me each and every day.

### Interlude: Intro chords

### Verse 2:

A log almost caught me flying through the air  
The beech I was cutting cut loose and barber chaired.  
Accidents usually happen when you're tired and working late.  
Your saw gets heavy and your mind has gone away.

## Chorus

### Interlude: Intro chords

### Verse 3:

I feel into the river off my dad's sail  
boat.  
A rope wrapped my ankle under  
water I did go.  
I was swimming with the fishes in  
the Susquehanna  
Nothing like being saved by your  
father's hand.

## Chorus

### Interlude: Intro chords

### Verse 4:

I hear a train a coming, it's coming  
round the bend,  
The train's gonna get me I just don't  
know when.  
The time will come when I ride that  
last ride.  
That little black train has a seat for  
me inside.

## Chorus

## Outro: Intro chords



# Van Wagner Songbook

## Vol. 7: 20 Years North of 80

Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner

Photo Credit: Alex Patterson  
Last Updated: 6/14/2022

# All I Ever Wanted

North of 80

Van Wagner  
December 2000

**Capo:** 2nd Fret

## Verse 1:

G G—Em  
All I ever wanted was a house in the country  
D  
Facing to the West.  
G G—Em  
All I ever wanted was a woman to love me  
D  
And let the years do the rest,

## Chorus:

C D G-----Em  
That's not the way it is for everyone  
C D G  
Not the way for everyone  
C D G-----Em  
The wind blows so cold, when your back's to the sun.  
C D G  
And you're facing the day on your own.

## Verse 2:

I've got no lucky numbers, I have no favorite colors  
They all suit me just the same.  
I rarely read instructions, got dust on all the manuals  
Make my own rules for each game.

## Chorus

## Verse 3:

I've walked a bit on crutches, had my share of broken bones,  
Took the pain with a grin.  
I've stood outside a coal mine thinking "man I shouldn't be here"  
And yet I went on in.

## Chorus

# Roots

## Alone

Van Wagner  
1999 - Dec. 24, 2002

**Capo: 4th Fret**

**Verse 1:**

C F C  
Like the past my tracks are laid straight down  
F C  
And I'm hitching a rail to some lost town.  
Am Em F  
And I'll find my way around this world  
C  
With a handful of hope and the heart of a girl.

**Chorus:**

Am C  
Gotta put roots down of my own.

Am C G  
Gotta put roots down, build myself a home.

Am C  
Gotta put roots down, in some land

F  
Oh, I need a place to stand.

### Verse 2:

Last night I wondered my thoughts in a knot  
Found the end of the string, the truth was all I'd caught.  
It's skin tight wrapping let me see who I am  
And tomorrow is dripping, covering the land.

### Chorus (x2)



**Capo: 2nd Fret**

G D G  
On a hill in Danville, he'd look out across the sky,  
C G  
Slippin' on his Dobro, he'd make the Willows cry.  
C G  
If I was lucky, he'd play my tune again,  
G D G  
"Pretty Boy Floyd the Outlaw" on his Gibson Mandolin.

C G  
How I miss those Gibsons, singing me to sleep.  
C G D  
I'd lay awake many a night, to the words that they'd speak.  
G C G  
I wonder if they're still in tune, the way I remember them,  
G D C G  
That 30 something 6 string, and the Lloyd Loar mandolin.

The best thing I ever learned wasn't my ABC's  
It was the dancing of his fingers, playing G, C, and D.  
I watched him like a buzzard as I grew up through the years,  
He'd drink that cool water, with the Sons of the Pioneers.

What I thought would last forever, vanished overnight.  
We thought we ruled that mountain, but what gave us the right?  
And when old Jeb was leaving, I only thought of him,  
And let the dust take the 6 string, and the Lloyd Loar to the wind.

## Chorus

# Rust Never Sleeps

## Sing Out

Van Wagner

June 2, 2021

### Intro: Am F C (x3)

G

### Verse 1:

Am F C

Booker T and MG's

Am F C

Took a road trip with me

Am F C

Both along for the ride

G

To a Pittsburgh sky,

Am F C

We drove a blue Cadillac

Am F C

Threw guitars in the back.

Am F C

At least that's how I

G

Remember it.

### Chorus:

F C G

Rust never sleeps in Steel City

F C G

The land of lost souls and hillbillies

F C G

That night we melted down

Dm F G

When Neil Young came to Pittsburgh town

**Instrumental:** Intro chords

### Verse 2:

Down the Copperhead road

Our Cadillac did go.

To a guitar town

Out in the world.

He had his thumb in the wind.

We made room for him.

Didn't know it then

It was Steve Earle.

### Chorus

### Instrumental

### Verse 3:

Route 119

Adrenaline and caffeine.

Staring up at the stars

As we drove home.

1993

I was still 16

But I was never the same

After Neil Young's show.

### Chorus

**Outro:** Am F C (x7)

# Lattimer Massacre

## Climbing to the Top

Van Wagner  
1997

**Capo:** Open, 3rd or 4th Fret

### Verse 1:

G C G  
1897, it's a cold September morning,  
C G C D  
There's something in the air today that's chilling me to the bone.  
G C  
Looking out my shack window, up by old number 9,  
C G D G  
I can see some man gathering, as the fog takes its time.  
G C G  
There's wives and kids off to the side, waving as they go.  
C G C D  
There must be 350 of them coming down the road.  
G C  
So I hollered out to one of them "hey what ya marching for?"  
G D G  
He said "we're marching out of this town and on to Lattimer!"

### Chorus:

C G  
Said "we're marching on for liberty in this land of the brave and free  
C G C D  
I'm sick of living my life, like a piece of machinery."  
G C  
He said "son I'm sick of living like a second class human being,  
G D G  
We ain't asking for charity, just a little equality."

### Verse 2:

Well the fog has finally rolled away and the sun is to its peak.  
Someone said 10 miles have passed beneath our feet.  
We come from many countries, many foreign lands,  
But we're waving old stars and stripes to show that we're American  
Just around Hazleton, up stepped old sheriff Martin.  
He said "you've gone far enough boys, go back to where you come from."  
Well there wasn't no stopping in these men's eyes you could see  
right to their souls,  
Their hearts filled with freedom, and their lungs filled with coal.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

As the men marched on to  
Lattimer, believing all was  
fine.  
Sheriff Martin had him a  
hundred men, waiting down the  
line.  
They were armed with the  
Sheriff's rifles, he had  
deputized a hundred men.  
Yet not a single marcher had  
a weapon in their hand.  
The Sheriff opened fire, and  
the flag fell to the ground.  
It's as if God went deaf that  
day amidst that dying  
sound.  
I ain't ever seen nothing like it,  
and I hope I never do again.  
It's a sin that a dollar weighs  
more than a man.

### Verse 4:

So for the 19 men that died that  
day, won't you reach into  
your soul.  
And tell me who are the real  
Americans in this story that  
we hold?  
Is it the thugs with the rifles,  
and the badges on their  
chest,  
Or those who marched for  
freedom, and lay in eternal  
rest?

### Chorus

# Tobacco From Tennessee

North of 80

Van Wagner  
February 2001

Capo: Capo 5th

**Intro:** F C G C

## Verse 1:

F C G C  
I don't know why that I love her so  
F C G  
Maybe her smile or her skin,  
Am C F C  
But I know it is something that is driving me wild  
G  
No, I can't put my finger on it.

I know I usually don't ask you much  
But this ain't no time for pride.  
Come on, let me in, put my Jones-in' to an end.  
I need some of what you got inside.

## Chorus:

C  
She got lager from Pottsville  
G C  
She got single malt Scotch Whiskey

She got roots on the Schuylkill  
F C G C  
And Tobacco from Tennessee

## Verse 2:

Some don't believe in love at first sight,  
They say that's for fairy tales and such.  
But I know it's for real, there's no faking how I feel.  
With You I just can't get enough.

My folks raised me to be cultured and such  
To appreciate the finer things in life.  
But I waste no time with cappuccino or wine,  
No, I prefer the culture of my wife.

## Chorus

# Sing Out

## Sing Out

Van Wagner

June 1, 2021

### Verse 1:

Am G  
Sometimes we get crazy in this country about thoughts  
F E  
We tell people they ought not think the thoughts that they thought.  
Am G  
We place hands on our hearts and we pledge to all be free  
F E  
But what we really mean is "you better think like me".

### Chorus:

Am G F G  
Sing out, sing out sing out  
Am G F G  
That's what freedom's about.  
Am G  
Find your song find your voice  
F G  
Think your thoughts choose a choice  
Am G F G  
Sing out, sing out, sing out.

**Instrumental:** Am G F G (x2)

### Verse 2:

Pete Seeger must have felt like he was caught in a bad dream.  
He and the Weavers and their song Goodnight Irene.  
They were the top of the charts the hottest show in town  
Then they were called communists and knocked to the ground.  
Almost overnight to the bottom they did go  
Their concerts were canceled, then years with no shows.  
Called before congress Pete had to testify  
Pete Seeger the American stared the devil in the eye

**Chorus + Instrumental**

### Verse 3:

Woody Guthrie, Sonny Terry,  
and Brownie McGee  
Played some songs for the men  
in the US Army.  
They offered Woody a fine seat  
but sent his friends to the  
back.  
Their uniforms were green but  
their skin was too black.  
Woody walked to the head table  
to the officers crowd  
"this fight against fascism starts  
right here and now"  
He flipped the table over and  
walked out the back  
After that they never asked him  
back.

**Chorus + Instrumental**

### Verse 4:

Sometimes we get crazy in this  
country about thoughts  
We tell people they ought not  
think the thoughts that they  
thought.  
We place hands on our hearts  
and we pledge to all be free  
But what we really mean is "you  
better think like me".

**Chorus (x1) + Instrumental (x2)**

# Crescent Moon

North of 80

Van Wagner  
February 2001

**Capo:** 3rd Fret

**Intro:** D G / Bm A G (x2)

## Verse 1:

D G  
I had a dream last night that I did something right.  
Bm A G  
And it all worked out o.k.  
A D A G A  
I wasn't messing up like I do when I'm awake.

D G  
A dream is a gift in life, a thread spun from the night  
Bm A G  
While it's tied around your heart.  
A D A G A D  
My heart is tied but free to go out in the dark.

## Chorus:

A D A  
I'll dream a dream for you  
G A  
It will be right on it will be in tune.  
D A G A  
I've got nothing to hide  
G A  
Like a far off star and a crescent moon.

**Instrumental:** Intro

## Verse 2:

In God do you trust or has your faith turned to rust.  
Like the car that you drive.  
You choose to believe what you want but I choose to be alive.

You've got to be so bold, to let go of the old.  
And jump into the new.  
We've been given the gift of today and tomorrow can be yours too.

**Chorus + Instrumental**

# Forgive My Trespasses

## The Boone Sessions

Van Wagner

August 2020

**Capo:** 2nd Fret

**Intro:** G C G D (x2)

### Verse 1:

G C  
 I'm a real ridge runner I was born with no shirt  
 D G  
 Like the Chestnut Oak I grew from this dirt.  
 C  
 I walk where I may I hike where I can  
 D G  
 Like the Sun and wind I'm all over this land.

### Chorus:

Em  
 Forgive my trespasses  
 C G  
 There's gonna be more  
 Em  
 Forgive my trespasses  
 C G  
 I've gotta explore

**Instrumental:** Intro + Verse Chords

### Verse 2:

No trespassing signs yellow and square  
 Stapled in trees, everywhere.  
 It can't be a crime to walk in the woods  
 Sinning is bad but woods are good.

### Chorus + Instrumental

### Verse 3:

Up on the mountain down in the holler  
 Find a good spring and get you a swaller  
 Keep an eye on the Sun to keep track of the hour  
 Keep an eye on the ridge and wild wildflowers.

### Chorus + Instrumental

# \$20 Bill

## Hungry

Van Wagner  
June 9, 2022

**Capo:** 5th Fret

### Verse 1:

G                      C                      G  
I am thankful for the money in my pocket  
Em--G  
I got a \$20 bill  
Em--G  
I got a \$20 bill  
G                      C                      G  
I am thankful for the food in my gullet  
Em-----G  
I got beef steak 'til I'm filled  
Em-----G  
I got beef steak 'til I'm filled

### Chorus:

G              G  
Hey, hey, ho, ho  
Em--G  
I got a \$20 bill  
Em--G  
I got a \$20 bill

### Verse 2:

Can you hear it, can you hear that old gray fox  
He is barking like a dog  
He is barking like a dog  
Have you see it, have you seen that old fox trot  
He's climbing trees and logs  
He's climbing trees and logs

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

I've been down, I've been down so long  
It must be up from here  
It must be up from here  
Long gone, like a turkey through the corn  
Now it's corn through the deer  
Now it's corn through the deer

### Chorus

### Verse 4:

I'm staying where the water tastes like wine  
Oh this water tastes so good  
Oh this water tastes so good  
Hey, I drink it all the time  
Water from the woods  
Water from the woods

### Chorus

### Verse 5:

What ya gonna do when you get old Knoxville  
Going right downtown  
Going right downtown  
Living high while there's money in my pocket  
Til the morning comes around  
Til the morning comes around

### Chorus





# Van Wagner Songbook Vol. 8: Hard Times & Hometown Heroes

Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner

Photo Credit: Alex Patterson  
Last Updated: 8/16/2023

# I'm Going Out in the Woods

## Hungry

Van Wagner with musical ideas from Charles  
Baucom  
Dec. 2022

**Intro:** F C G / C G F / F C G C

### Chorus:

F                      C        G  
I'm going out in the woods  
      C        G            F  
I'm never coming back  
              F            C        G  
I've had enough of this world  
              C        G            F  
I ain't even looking back

### Verse 1:

                  G                                      C  
Have you heard the wind through a white pine  
              G                                      C  
The finest music you will hear  
              G                                      C  
The rush of cool water in a ravine  
              F                                      G  
Heart medicine you take in your ear

### Chorus

**Interlude:** Intro chords

### Verse 2:

Summer sound of the night in the forest  
Whippoorwill and katydids all around  
I've laid there looking up at the night sky  
My only blanket was that sacred sound

### Chorus

**Interlude**

### Verse 3:

I've had my fill of hard times  
Weight on my heart and pain day by day  
I know a peace I can find  
I'm heading there today

### Chorus

**Interlude**

### Verse 4:

My new friends have fur and feathers  
They're covered in beautiful leaves  
I sure hope they accept me  
Cause once I'm there I'm never gonna leave

### Chorus

**Outro:** Interlude chords

# Loose Skinned Dog

## If Time Could Stand Alone

Van Wagner

Feb. 11

### Intro: Chorus Chords

#### Chorus:

D

Send me a loose skinned dog

A

Loose skinned dog loose skinned dog

G

Send me a loose skinned dog

D

A

D

To get this rabbit from this log

### Interlude: Intro chords

#### Verse 1:

D

Send me a polish wife,

A

we'll have halupki every night

G

D

And if that girl can't be mine

D

A

D

send me some dago wine

### Chorus

### Interlude

#### Verse 2:

Send me a Winchester, 32 caliber

The finest gun my father owned, lever action in his bones

### Chorus

### Interlude

#### Verse 3:

The cats the pane at the birds outside  
the birds don't care about the cats inside  
Birds, cats, frikatee frack,  
my loose skinned dog is coming back

### Chorus

### Outro: Interlude chords

# Hungry

## Hungry

Van Wagner

Aug. 2022

**Intro:** A Em

**Verse 1:**

Em

A Em

Have you ever been hungry

A Em

Not enough to eat

A Em

Most animals live that way

C D

But not you and me

We may know it now and then

Short on cash or running late

But the animals in the forest

Go hungry every day

**Refrain:**

Em D C D (x2)

Oooooo

**Verse 2:**

Today I saw a white tail

I could count every rib

Her fawn didn't look much better

The spots just kept it hid

The other day I saw a bullfrog

In a dry dusty field

Such a long way from water

Just searching for a meal

**Refrain**

**Verse 3:**

The trees thirst for water

They're hungry for rain

The skies are blue and empty

Some clouds pass in vain

So I sit and count my blessings

Thanks God for house and food

To my friend in the forest

I pray you find some too.

**Refrain**

# Daniel Boone

## The Boone Sessions

Van Wagner

Nov. 7, 2020

**Intro:** Em D (x4)

### Verse 1:

Em  
Born in Berks County  
D  
His Pennsylvania home  
Em  
Crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains  
D  
Headed West to roam

First to Kentucky  
Then Tennessee  
He stole skins from the Indians  
Catawba and Cherokee

### Chorus:

C G D  
Hey hey Daniel Boone  
C G Em  
Did you chase the blue Kentucky moon

**Interlude:** C G D (x2)  
Em D (x2)

### Verse 2:

900 deer skins  
Tallow and tongues  
7 months of hunting  
The long hunt was done

He would have cashed in  
Had he made it back  
But he was caught by the Cherokee  
At Cumberland Gap

### Chorus

### Interlude

### Verse 3:

Once caught by the Shawnees  
They took his skins  
They left him with a flintlock  
And some moccasins

He was lucky to get out  
His life still intact  
The command of the Shawnee  
Go home, don't come back

### Chorus

### Interlude

### Verse 4:

Every hunter feels it  
It's in your blood  
The thrill of the hunt  
The hope for more to come,

Boone the long hunter  
He lived by the gun  
He didn't hate the Indians  
Although they killed his son

### Chorus

**Outro:** Interlude chords

# Home Town

## The Pickle Barrel

Van Wagner

Fall 2002

**Intro:** D

**Verse 1:**

G
D  
 Do you remember the first day of school?  
G
D  
 You didn't know anyone and no one knew you  
G
D
A  
 But Mrs. Baylor she brought us around  
G
D  
 Then you've been to my home town

**Verse 2:**

Do you remember swimming the elephant rock  
 Susquehanna River where adventure never stops  
 We dodged poison ivy to build our forts underground  
 Then you've been to my home town

**Instrumental Break:** G D (x2)

**Verse 3:**

Do you remember Mr. Johnny Lahout  
 His church was the field and orange and purple was his suit  
 Your batting average and every touchdown  
 Then you've been to my home town

**Verse 4:**

Now get down to Pappas's before it's too late  
 Belly up to the bar and get yourself a hot dog plate  
 Familiar faces as you look around  
 Then you've been to my home town

**Instrumental Break**

# Mr. Danville

## Family Guitar

Van Wagner

Mar. 20, 2020

For Larry Gipple

**Intro/Interlude:** C F / C G (x2)

### Verse 1:

C F  
 Have you met my friend Larry, He's gentle and kind  
 C G  
 He'll give you a hug, maybe a high five  
 C F  
 He really likes music he loves Danville  
 C G  
 Wears orange and purple and keeps things chill  
 F G C  
 He's Larry, friend to us all

### Chorus:

C F  
 He loves people, he loves this town  
 C G  
 Our lives are better because he's around  
 C F  
 Down to the river, up on the hill  
 C G C  
 Raise a glass to Mr. Danville

### Interlude

### Verse 2:

He cheers for the ironmen at every game  
 Whenever they're home and sometimes away  
 The basketball court, the football field  
 Baseball, lacrosse, track and field  
 He's Larry, friend to us all.

### Chorus

### Interlude

### Verse 3:

Bloomsburg has fountains, Lewisburg Bucknell  
 You can ice skate in Sunbury, the squeeze-in  
 as well  
 But Danville has Larry, we're lucky we do  
 He makes life better for me and you  
 He's Larry, friend to us all

### Chorus

**Outro:** Interlude chords (then end on C)

# Mugsy's Gone

**Shikellamy**

Van Wagner  
Jan. 15, 2008

**Capo:** 2nd Fret

**Intro:** C

**Chorus**

**Verse 1:**

C                      G                      F                      C  
It knocked me back when he told me the news  
F              C                      G              Am  
He laid it out pure and plain like I already knew  
F                      C                      F  
I guess I should have seen it, seen it all along  
C                      G              F                      C  
When Mugsy left this valley, he left us with a song

**Interlude**

**Chorus**

**Outro:** Interlude chords

**Chorus:**

Am                      C  
Mugsy's gone, off of Main Street  
Am                      G  
Mugsy's gone, not coming back  
F                      C  
I find myself missing that record store  
G                      F C  
And the music of the needle as it scratched

**Interlude:** F C (x4)

**Verse 2:**

Before the years when you could download a tune  
We loaded up on vinyl and put the needle in the groove  
You could get a dozen songs for just 99 cents  
And the artwork on albums has gone downhill ever since

**Chorus**

**Verse 3:**

15 years going in that store.  
It turns out I was wrong about something before  
For the owner never told me, never told me all along  
The dog's name was Mugsy, his name was John



# Hard Coal

## If Time Could Stand Alone

Van Wagner

Spring 2002

**Intro:** D G D / G D A

### Verse 1:

D                                  G                                  D  
First day at the mine they handed me a bulldog shovel  
G                                  D                                  A  
They had me down on my knees in that tunnel muckin' away  
D                                  G                                  D  
Down there it's all the same you never see the seasons change  
G        D        A                  D  
No sun only rain day after day

**Refrain:**

C - Am-G A  
All for Friday's pay  
D5 G2 D  
Hard wood, hard coal it's hard on a man.

### Interlude: Verse chords

### Verse 2:

Now and then the lucky few got to work on the timber crew  
Cuttin' props to hold the roof out in the woods  
Droppin' oak in the morning sun couldn't be no branches on  
Got to be straight and strong to be any good

## Refrain

### Interlude: Verse chords

### Verse 3:

When it came to the head miner honkey eggs at the diner  
He's given his share of shiners to men in his days  
But now his bones are old, I bet half his weight is coal  
Spent most of his life in a hole, coughin' away

## Refrain

## Interlude

### Final Refrain:

D5  
And it's hard wood, hard coal it's  
G2            D  
hard on a man.

# Hard Coal Hard Times

## Shikellamy

Van Wagner  
Oct. 20, 2007  
For David Himmelberger

**Capo:** 2nd Fret

**Intro:** G C / G D G

**Chorus**

### Verse 1:

G  
David was a miner a miner all his life  
C  
Worked underground in hard coal 3 children and his wife  
G  
This year's been a bad one down at the mine  
D G  
It's hard coal, hard times.

**Interlude**

### Verse 4:

There's a saying in the region  
that every ton of coal  
Contains a drop of miners' blood  
bled in the hole  
Please give thanks, think about it  
from time to time  
For it's hard coal, hard times

### Chorus:

D C G  
It rained hard last night and it took our drought away  
D C D  
But there's no rain hard enough to wash away these days  
G C G  
So for independent miners whose life is the mines  
D G  
It's hard coal, hard times

**Chorus**

**Interlude:** Verse chords

### Verse 2:

It was a year ago now, an explosion underground  
It took the life of a good man and the heart of his town  
A death is never easy when they go before their time  
It's hard coal, hard times

### Verse 3:

Do we even get it? Do we appreciate it all?  
When we turn on computers or a switch on the wall  
The power we rely on in these electric lines  
comes from hard coal, hard times

# Jay Smar Just Likes to Play

## The Flood Sessions: Four Days of Rain

Van Wagner  
Nov. 2011

**Capo:** 2nd fret (bottom 5 strings only)  
Album: drop D

**Intro:** D A (x4) / D

### Verse 1:

A                      G                      D  
Why people play is different that's for sure  
A                      G                      D  
Some for money some for ego and some for Church  
G              D              A  
A few play for the love of song  
G              D  
It holds life together when life turns wrong

### Chorus:

D                      G  
He doesn't do it for the money  
D  
He doesn't do it for fame  
A  
What else can I say?  
G                      D  
Jay Smar just likes to play

**Interlude:** Intro chords

### Verse 2:

The Beatles landed and captured his soul  
Couldn't get enough of that rock and roll  
He got a guitar and he learned every tune  
From Norwegian Wood to Rocky Raccoon

### Chorus

### Interlude

### Verse 3:

Don't be fooled when he calls it a job  
He's still playing when the audience is gone  
I've seen him picking in his kitchen late at night  
I listened from his porch hiding out of sight

### Chorus

### Interlude

### Verse 4:

I'm lucky to know him and pick a bit with him  
I hope to hoist a few as soon as he can  
The whole coal region should crown him king  
He makes the mountains dance and the valleys sing

### Chorus (x2)

**Outro:** Intro chords



# Van Wagner Songbook Vol. 9: Mountain Ways

**Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner**

**Photo Credit: Alex Patterson**

**Last Updated: 8/13/2024**

# In Alvira

## Government Man

Tom Flannery and Van Wagner  
July 2023

### Intro: D

### Verse 1:

D C bass  
You want to pry me from this town?  
D C bass  
You'll need to drag me off this ground  
Bb  
I ain't moving from this rocking chair  
C  
While these lungs still move air  
D  
In Alvira  
Bb C D  
Hmmmmmmm, in Alvira

### Verse 2:

My farm ain't for bunkers and bombs  
So why don't you and your boys just move along  
Your 35 cents on the dollar son...  
Ain't about to feed anyone  
In Alvira  
Hmmmmmmm, in Alvira

### Chorus:

Am7 C D  
Hallelujah sing it slow  
Am7 C D  
Cause we ain't got no place left to go

### Verse 3:

My walls are covered with broken hearts  
From all the stops and all the starts  
But they never once had to fear  
Not having this place right here  
In Alvira  
Hmmmmmmm, in Alvira

**Tuning:** Drop D (?)

### Verse 4:

All your promises can go to hell  
I know your kind all too well  
With your fancy talk and remember whens  
Robbing us with a fountain pen  
In Alvira  
Hmmmmmmm, in Alvira

### Chorus

**Outro:** Verse chords

# Splitting Rails

## A Mountain Man's Dream

Van Wagner  
May 12, 2015

**Intro:** D G A D

### Chorus:

D  
Splitting rails, splitting rails  
Gonna build myself a fence.  
G  
Keep the deer outta here  
A D  
Keep the apples in.

### Verse 1:

G D  
Abe Lincoln was a splitting man  
A  
Rail splitter it's said.  
G D  
He split logs of chestnut  
A D  
And built himself a fence.

Then our country did some splitting too  
Tween North and the South  
He stopped that log from splitting  
And drove the wedge out.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Intro x2

### Verse 2:

Get yourself a metal wedge  
An ax and a sledge  
Get a log, without knots  
And an ax with an edge.

**Tuning:** Capo 2 (fake drop D)

Start the log with the ax  
A strike at the end.  
Pound the wedge with the sledge  
Drive it on in.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Intro x2

### Verse 3:

Throughout life they'll be times  
A wedge will come between.  
Sometimes it's a mess  
And sometimes it's clean.

Abe Lincoln, with his ax  
Or you just the same.  
Hit those logs straight on  
It's all about the aim.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Intro x2

# Hemlocks

## The Fringe

Van Wagner  
Jan. 26, 2014

**Intro:** Am G Am G  
Am G Am (x2)

### Chorus:

Am G Am  
Way out on Roaring Creek  
Am G Am  
The Hemlocks still grow high.  
G Am G  
Take time to see them before they're gone  
Am G Am  
From giants to dust in time.

### Verse 1:

Am G Am  
I thank God for the Hemlock  
G Am  
an amazing gift of green.  
G Am G  
Thicker than cotton taller than wind  
Am G Am  
If you've seen them you know what I mean.

As a kid they were still here in Danville  
Lovers Leap and behind Beaver Place  
The cycle path still dark at noon  
In hot summer a cool hiding place.

### Chorus

### Instrumental: Intro

### Verse 2:

Years ago it was the bark peelers  
Worked the bark from the trees.  
A spud and ax to peel the logs bare  
And ship it to tanneries.

The hands of the men stained purple  
Tannins soaked in their skin.  
In the fall I can see it on the creeks and streams  
Like blood from the mighty stands.

### Chorus

### Instrumental

### Verse 3:

Soon they'll be just a legend  
A few still alive here and there.  
But I fear the age of dense hemlock stands  
Will live only in local folklore.

Old foresters will recall their memories  
To young folks who never saw for themselves  
But like the Hemlocks the old woodsmen too  
Will fade from the Pennsylvania hills.

### Chorus

### Instrumental



# Miner's Wife

## Alone

Van Wagner

Oct. 2003

### Intro: Verse chords

#### Verse 1:

C            G                            C  
 My wife is a miner's wife hey hey  
 C  
 My wife is a miner's wife hey hey  
 F            C                            C-walk down to    Am  
 My wife is a miner's wife, worries too much of her life.  
 C                            G                            C  
 Somebody tell the lord what's going on.

#### Verse 2:

A miner works his days towards hell anyway.  
 A miner works his days towards hell anyway.  
 A miner works his days towards hell until we ring his  
     death knell.  
 Somebody tell the lord what's going on.

#### Verse 3:

His knees are spent and his lungs are going bad.  
 His knees are spent and his lungs are going bad.  
 His knees are spent and his lungs are bad a spitting  
     image of his dad  
 Somebody tell the lord what's going on.

#### Verse 4:

Then the breaker takes the coal and runs ah ha  
 Then the breaker takes the coal and runs ah ha  
 Then the breaker takes the coal and runs like the farmer  
     with his profits gone.  
 Somebody tell the lord what's going on.

### Instrumental: Verse chords

#### Verse 5:

Now we import our coal from China's soil  
     hey hey  
 Now we import our coal from China's soil  
     hey hey  
 We import our coal from China's soil they  
     go through men like motor oil.  
 Somebody tell the lord what's going on.

#### Verse 6:

My wife is a miner's wife hey hey  
 My wife is a miner's wife hey hey  
 My wife is a miner's wife, worries too  
     much of her life.  
 Somebody tell the lord what's going on.



# King of Pennsylvania

## Government Man

Van Wagner

Jan. 12, 2023

### Intro: G

### Verse 1:

G C G  
 Hey mountain mama I caught you looking at me  
 A D  
 I'm going to the river won't you come along and see?  
 G C  
 I know the perfect place and I've got my fishing pole.  
 G E A D G  
 Let's go have some fun honey at the catfish hole

### Verse 2:

This weathers getting hot, too hot for me  
 Let's put on our cutoffs and head to White Deer Creek,  
 We can jump off the rocks and cool off by the falls.  
 Out at White Deer Creek, they say nature calls.

### Chorus:

C G  
 Hey I'm living like a king  
 A D  
 Cause where I'm living I have everything  
 G C  
 I'm the king of Pennsylvania and living is good  
 G E A D G  
 Be the queen of Pennsylvania, hey out in the woods.

### Verse 3:

You could have your choice the city if you want  
 Off to Philadelphia to a fancy restaurant.  
 If you stay with me you can paddle my canoe  
 I'm at home on the water but honey can you canoe  
 too?

### Verse 4:

We can dine on the island and dance a bit  
 too  
 We'll head to Jerseytown and we'll really cut  
 loose.  
 Then it's back home to the mountains to  
 where it began  
 When we wake up tomorrow, we'll do it all  
 again.

### Chorus

# Fall

## Started with a Board

Van Wagner  
Sept. 17, 2012

**Intro:** C D Em (x3)  
C D Em G

### Verse 1:

G D G  
Another day over I'm headed home dry  
D G  
My bones aren't broken but I'm gone in my mind.  
Em Am  
There was a time when I could work a whole day  
D7  
Then pick up my guitar and play the whole night away.  
C D G-Em  
But those years feel so foreign they hardly seem me.  
Am D  
Just throw me some dinner, some Yuengling, some  
G  
sleep.

### Chorus:

C D G-Em  
The soybeans turn yellow as fall takes the year  
Am D7  
I pass wagons of pumpkins the harvest is here.  
C D G-Em  
The bright colors of Summer all faded and brown.  
Am7 D  
Just the star spangled banner on the post office  
G  
grounds.

**Instrumental:** Intro

**Tuning:** Capo 4 or 5

### Verse 2:

It took the wind from me, right out from my  
sails  
I'm too old for the army, tried to join but I  
failed.  
I thought something different might turn  
things around  
But there's no basic training when your  
years track you down.  
So it's stick to the plan now stay steady  
and firm  
Growing season is closing now to see what  
it's worth.

### Chorus

### Instrumental

### Verse 3:

It's no surprise to me, I've always loved fall.  
When I think back to Bald Top I smell Oak  
leaves and moss.  
The only thing green then just the moss  
and pine  
The only thing in the forest that pays no  
mind to time.  
So now it's my own call, will I be Oak or  
Pine?  
Give in to my seasons or make it all mine.

### Chorus

### Instrumental

# Collier's Life (In the Shadow of the Mountain)

## Lost in the Mountains

Van Wagner  
March 5, 2010

**Intro:** Am G Am  
C G Am

### Verse 1:

Am G Am  
I've worked in the woods since the time I was young.  
C G  
The same as my dad, I'm collier's son.  
Am G Am  
Four fires a time I tend them alone.  
C G  
A small bark hut I call my home.

### Chorus:

F C Am G  
A chopping ax and the fire cracks  
C  
It's music comes sounding.  
F C Am G  
And the dust is dry, and the charcoal's black  
Am  
In the shadow of the mountain.

### Verse 2:

Pennies a bushel, I'm paid for my coal.  
My shovel and rake I bought on my own.  
To the iron masters' pockets my profits all go.  
To pay for Philadelphia and millionaires row.

But that life for mine I never would trade.  
His master's the dollar, he's still a slave.  
He mingles at meetings and tips his fur hat.  
Only fools would chase a life such as that.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Intro

### Verse 3:

The season goes fast from Spring to the Fall  
The winter's for chopping, too windy for coal.  
The work may be hard and the hours long.  
But I'm free as a king in my forest home.

### Chorus

**Outro:** Am G Am / C G (x2)  
Am G Am

# Guns and Religion

## The Flood Sessions: Four Days of Rain

Van Wagner

### Chorus:

G  
Give us our guns and religion  
                  D                  G  
Give us our guns and religion  
                                  C  
Give us our guns and religion  
                  D                  G  
That's good enough for me.

### Verse 1:

Take the whole coal region  
There's no school for deer season  
Venison's their reason  
And that's good enough for me.

### Chorus

### Verse 2:

Head up north of 80  
They're fracking it like crazy  
Is that good or bad or maybe  
Well that's good enough for me

### Verse 3:

Down in dutch country  
They head to church on Sunday  
Then it's scrapple and tripe come Monday  
Well that's good enough for me

### Chorus

### Verse 4:

It's the Year of the Bible  
God forbid if that sounds tribal  
And don't sue me for libel  
'Cause that's good enough for me

### Verse 5:

Bullet holes in every road sign  
It's a firearm past time  
Illegal? Maybe sometimes  
Well it's good enough for me

### Chorus

### Verse 6:

Amish buggies instead of cars  
Pigeon shoots, churches and bars  
Mountain men pickin' guitars  
We'll that's good enough for me

### Verse 7:

So pour us a Yuengling  
we're gonna be a singing  
It's a Pennsylvania Feeling  
And that's good enough for me

### Chorus (x2)

# Going Back to Bald Top Mountain

## Going Back to Bald Top

Van Wagner

Started Fall 1999, finished Feb 25th, 8:42pm, 2000

Just before a Frog Holler concert in Reading PA

### Verse 1:

G D  
It was a warm July night, couple years ago  
C G D  
I just got back to Danville from a weekend on the road.  
C G D  
I was feeling pretty beat, I was feeling pretty tired,  
C G D  
When my dad came to me with that bad look in his eyes  
C G D  
Said "The weather's been ruff, in the days that you've been gone  
C D  
We lost part of the family in the winds of that storm."

### Chorus:

G C G  
Come back Robbie, come back Ben  
D  
Call up David and Brian.  
G C G  
Come back RJ, Mike, and friends  
D G  
We're going back to Bald Top Mountain.

### Verse 2:

It took the loss of a very good friend  
For me to wake up and look at my life again.  
It was like a diesel train, hit me right between the eyes  
21 tons of steel, 21 years went by.  
I was living in myself, too busy to look back  
Now I finally got it right and I'm back on track.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Verse chords

### Verse 3:

Well life's too short to dwell on  
things like this.  
You could drive yourself crazy just  
thinking what you've missed.  
About the days when we were  
young, about the days when  
we dreamed  
Our bag of tomorrows was  
busting at the seams.  
It's not too late to take another  
ride,  
Let's fire up the 3 wheeler one  
more time.

### Chorus

### Outro:

Yeah, we're going back to Bald  
Top Mountain. (x2) C G D G

# Woolrich Coat

## Woolrich Coat

Van Wagner  
August 18, 2008

**Tuning:** Capo 2 (fake drop D)

### Intro: D

### Verse 1:

G D  
12 years old, first time hunting with his dad.  
G D  
He flips his collar up, to stop the cold with his red and black, plaid.  
Em G D  
In a drizzle rain it grows heavy, heavy as a stone.  
Em G D  
He's keeping warm, he's got his father's Woolrich coat on.

### Refrain:

A G F D  
I thank dad for the memories and Woolrich for the coat.

### Instrumental: Intro chords

### Verse 2:

Hanging on the wall with a patch on the breast.  
Smells of mothballs and the old cedar chest.  
My favorite is the game pouch on the back.  
Feathers from a pheasant or a good rope to drag.

### Refrain + Instrumental

### Verse 3:

On cool fall days, wake early and put on that wool.  
Slip my hands in the pockets by the ribs and go for a stroll.  
And so it goes for years, daughters and sons.  
Mr. Rich's coat keeps warm, those who keep it on.

### Refrain + Instrumental + Refrain



# Van Wagner Songbook Vol. 10: Pennsylvania Blues

**Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner**

**Photo Credit: Alex Patterson  
Last Updated: 8/13/2025**

# Coal Region Girl

## Mexico Road

Van Wagner  
March 22, 2025

**Intro:** E

### Verse 1:

E  
I'll tell you something I have found to be true  
If you wanna be happy you need a woman who is true  
A  
Not some fancy Nancy chasing fortune and fame  
E  
Just a level headed mama who'll love you just the same.  
B7  
I'll tell you where to find one, they're still there today  
E  
It's the hard coal region of Northeast PA

### Chorus:

A  
Coal region girl  
You know she'll be true  
E  
Coal region girl  
You know she loves you.  
B  
Don't waste time, put a ring on that hand.  
E  
A coal region woman makes a happy man.

**Instrumental:** Verse chords

### Verse 2:

Stay away from those high brows who won't even drink a beer  
Get a Yuengling drinking lady who knows how to skin a deer  
She'll tell you secrets you've never heard before  
Before you know it you're begging for more.  
She's got no delusions of a mansion on the hill.  
She grew up in a row home and she's living there still

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Verse chords

### Verse 3:

Her daddy was a miner and her  
granddad he was too  
Her grandma made halupki and  
boilo too  
She goes to church on Sunday and  
helps out with the school  
She doesn't need Hawaii she settles  
for the pool  
She loves her children, a better  
mother you won't find.  
A hard coal woman is like a diamond  
in the mine.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Verse chords





# Royal Blue

## Sing Out

Van Wagner  
December 28, 2021

**Tuning:** 1 ½ steps down  
(Db-Gb-B-E-Ab-Db)

**Intro:** Em

**Chorus**

### Verse 1:

Em                      G                      Em  
You wreck me baby, you wreck me good.  
                                 C                      Em  
You rock and roll me, like a good girl should.  
   G                      Em  
When you've had your fun, you leave me broken and bent.  
   C                      Em  
Leave me wondering, where the good times went.

**Instrumental:** Intro chords x2

### Chorus:

   C  
Would you change for me  
   G  
Like I changed for you  
   D                      Em  
Royal blue, royal blue.

**Instrumental:** Intro chords

### Verse 2:

You count my falls, you beg for change  
If you're gonna stay, it can't be the same.  
So I've changed my ways, I'm not the rounder you once knew.  
I quit my rowdy ways, but I can't quit you.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Intro chords + verse chords + intro chords

### Verse 3:

Do you want this dance, to a goodnight song.  
Gonna cut a rug, I'm bringing you along.  
You say I don't dance and you say I am strange  
I wanna hear you say it, that baby I've changed

# Harrisburg Blues

## Harrisburg Blues

Van Wagner and Adam Keir

March 27, 2024

**Tuning:** Capo 2

**Intro:** D

**Instrumental**

**Verse 1:**

D

The wind hits the water, the water hits the wind

Paddles cut through rivers, again and again

G

I'm trying to get home, I got miles left to go

D

Maybe tomorrow or the next day for sure.

**Refrain**

**Outro:** Instrumental chords (x2)

**Refrain:**

A

It's colder up North, that is nothing new

G

D

I'm stuck in Harrisburg, I've got the Harrisburg blues.

**Instrumental:** G G D (x4)

**Verse 2:**

I headed down to Paxtang, the Conestoga creek

I dig this fertile soil and those towering trees.

But it's just not home and it's never gonna be

Gotta get up this river where I long to be

**Refrain**

**Instrumental**

**Verse 3:**

Hey hey Susquehannam, hey you magic stream

Won't you carry me up river like floating on a dream

I'm gonna drink that mountain water gonna get it from a spring

I've had enough city water, had enough of this chlorine

**Refrain**

# When It Rains It Pours

## River Rat

Van Wagner  
July 31, 2016

**Intro:** G B7 Em  
A D D7

### Chorus:

G B7 Em  
When it rains it pours.  
A D D7  
Been here many times before.  
G B7 Em  
Like when a guitar finds a chord.  
A D D7  
You hear it, and know it's pure.

### Verse 1:

C G  
If I was a betting man  
B7 Em  
I'd double down on this.  
C G  
The Sun will rise tomorrow.  
D  
And the night will ruin it.

Shouldn't be so down and out.  
But it's the truth of how I feel.  
Seems like when I start to climb.  
It's a thorn that takes the heel.

### Chorus

### Verse 2:

I just lost a drinking friend.  
He didn't die, he just quit.  
Something tells me I should follow him  
Until then alone I sit.

**Tuning:** Capo 5

Ain't it true that the better choice  
Is the one that's hard to pick.  
Years will pass and you'll look back  
And you'll be glad you did.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

Here comes another storm.  
They're getting kind of old.  
When I was a younger man  
I loved the thunder roll.

Maybe I can still let go  
And enjoy the summer rain.  
The sky cracks the mountains  
And I'm a young man again.

### Chorus

**Outro:** Intro chords, G

# Hard Rock to the Bone

## Harrisburg Blues

Van Wagner  
October 27, 2023

**Intro:** Em D C (x2)

### Verse 1:

G
C
G  
 He's was a man of stone, but stone can break  
Em
D
C  
 There's only so much a heart can take.  
G
C
G  
 He worked his life with a hammer and drill  
Em
D
C  
 He worked underground inside of hills.

His father came from the north of Wales  
 His mother wishes they lived there still.  
 He went underground at the age of 10  
 At 47 he's an old man.

### Chorus:

C
Em7  
 The dust of the mines  
D
C  
 In his lungs all his life  
C
Em7  
 A man, made of stone  
D
C  
 Hard rock, to the bone.  
 Hard rock, to the bone.

**Instrumental:** Intro chords

### Verse 2:

He mined the iron ore of Montour Ridge  
 He went underground in the slopes and drifts.  
 One ton per day, a dollar a shift  
 At the end of the week some company script.

**Tuning:** 1 whole step down (D-G-C-F-A-D)

Elbows to fingers from the floor to the roof.  
 Those oak timbers had to be strong and true.  
 His only joy was in his lunch pail  
 The roof was bad, it was crumbling shale.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Intro chords

### Verse 3:

The iron gave out in '89  
 Up 'til then it had been his whole life.  
 Some men they switched to mills in the town.  
 But his heart belonged in the underground.

He had no interest in working with coal.  
 The anthracite it'll steal your soul.  
 So he headed out west out to Idaho  
 He had to try for that placer gold.

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Intro chords (x2)

### Verse 4:

Only God knows how this story ends.  
 Did he find his glory or meet his end?  
 Is there a place in heaven for a mining man?  
 Can you work underground in the promised  
 land?

### Chorus

**Outro:** Intro chords (x2), Em

# Halfway There

## Started With a Board

Van Wagner  
2013

**Tuning:** 4th fret, but open low E

**Intro riff:** Walkdown G#-F#-E-C#-B-G#-E, then C

### Verse 1:

F                      G                      C-----Am  
 Life's a song life's a dream, life's everything between  
 F                      C                      G  
 Day to day, night to night all night  
 F                      G                      C-----Am  
 You're with, you're without, turned inside and out  
 F                      G                      C  
 That's the way that you know it's all right

### Chorus:

G                      C  
 Halfway there, halfway there  
*Intro riff*  
 I will meet you halfway there

**Instrumental:** Intro riff

### Verse 2:

Sometimes better, sometimes worse, it's a blessing and a curse  
 Can there really be a heaven here on earth?  
 We set out to be free filling up our needs  
 but alone and lonely are so close

### Chorus

**Instrumental:** Intro riff, then verse chords

### Verse 3:

Going home to the lord, can't deny  
 his word  
 Any more than the sun in the sky  
 The longer that I live the easier it is  
 to trust him with all of my life

**Chorus x2**

# Words of the Miners

## Going Back to Bald Top

Van Wagner  
October 1999

**Tuning:** 4th fret

### Verse 1:

G G-----Em  
I wish the mines were still running, on the other side of town,  
C G D  
I'd drown myself in labor in a life underground.  
C G G-----Em  
There's something in a miner's life that's familiar to me,  
D C-----G  
For it's only when I'm underground that my mind is truly free.

### Chorus

#### Outro:

G D  
"The miner is gone we'll see  
G  
him no more"

### Chorus:

C G  
And I've sung the song of a miner though I've never worked below.  
D Em  
But the words just come to me, like it's something that I know.  
C G-----Em  
Just a borrowed whisper I heard as a kid  
D C-----G  
Words of the miners, who worked Montour Ridge.

### Verse 2:

The house that I was raised in, on top Montour Ridge,  
Was built upon a mine drift, through the iron ore within.  
I dreamed I heard the miners sing at night, as I would sleep.  
Their ghosts still down there digging ore a hundred feet deep.

### Chorus

### Verse 3:

I've written many songs now, age twenty three  
And now I'm wondering if the songs belong true to me,  
Or if they were a miner's words sung 100 years before,  
Whispers of a miner's life that I've borrowed from the ore.

Well when my time is ended and my songs are sung no more  
I've asked you where to bury me in a song I've sung before  
Down where the mountains melt and the river flows into the air  
Take me up on Montour Ridge and sing the miner's prayer

# Empty as a 3 AM Bar

## Going Back to Bald Top

Van Wagner  
February 1, 2000

**Intro: G D (x2)**

### Verse 1:

G D G D  
You can barely recognize him, from the man he used to be.

G D A  
As I sit beside him, I pray that that won't be me.

G D G D  
Too many days of ramblin', too many nights without sleep,

G D A  
Too many years of drinking, he's got too many secrets to keep.

**Chorus:**

G A D G A D  
 He's alone in his heart, it's as empty as a 3am bar  
 G A D A G  
 Here he demands, with a whiskey in his hand,  
 F#m G  
 That this world owes him something more,  
 A D  
 Yeah, the world owes him something more

### Instrumental: Intro chords

### Verse 2:

He's been down a thousand highways, and come back a  
thousand more.  
Every mile that he's traveled has left him a highway scar.  
He wears his sorrows like ribbons, gotten' buttoned on his  
chest,  
And he's told all his stories, but I'm still unimpressed

## Chorus

### Instrumental: Intro chords

### Verse 3:

My vision's getting blurry or I don't  
like what I see.

His face is like a mirror, and he's  
looking a lot like me.

Ah but that could never be me, I'm  
too smart of a man

But who am I to criticize, I've got  
the same whiskey in my hand.

## Chorus

### Outro: Intro chords



# When You Live in the Woods

## Sing Out

Van Wagner  
2021 or 2022

**Intro:** Verse chords

### Verse 1:

D                                      G                      D  
 In the time of the frost and the beaver moon  
    E                      A  
 The days grow short and the night falls soon.  
 D                                      G                      D  
 The night sky shines on the forests and the fields  
 E7      A      D  
 November air is so clear.

When you're looking at a tree and it's looking back at you.  
 You crawl up in the branches held steady by the roots.  
 High up in the canopy surrounded by the leaves  
 Nothing but that tree and me.

### Chorus:

                 G              D                                      G              D  
 When you live in the woods, when you live in the woods.  
                  G              D                                      G      A D  
 When you live in the woods, where the living is good.

**Instrumental:** Verse chords

### Verse 2:

In the time of the year of the katydid.  
 The forest fills with music as night sets in.  
 The forest feels alive with a brilliant green.  
 Wide awake but living in a dream.

When the wind blows cold on the Northern plains  
 Ice in your lungs and through your veins.  
 A thin slice of life on the Sawtooth range  
 City life feels strange.

**Tuning:** Standard

Recorded in open D (D-A-D-F#-A-D)

## Chorus

**Instrumental:** Verse chords

### Verse 3:

One of these years in my final hour  
 I'll be with the deer and the wildwood  
                  flower.  
 Deep in the woods I'll be alone  
 Ready for my journey home.

## Chorus

**Outro:** Verse chords