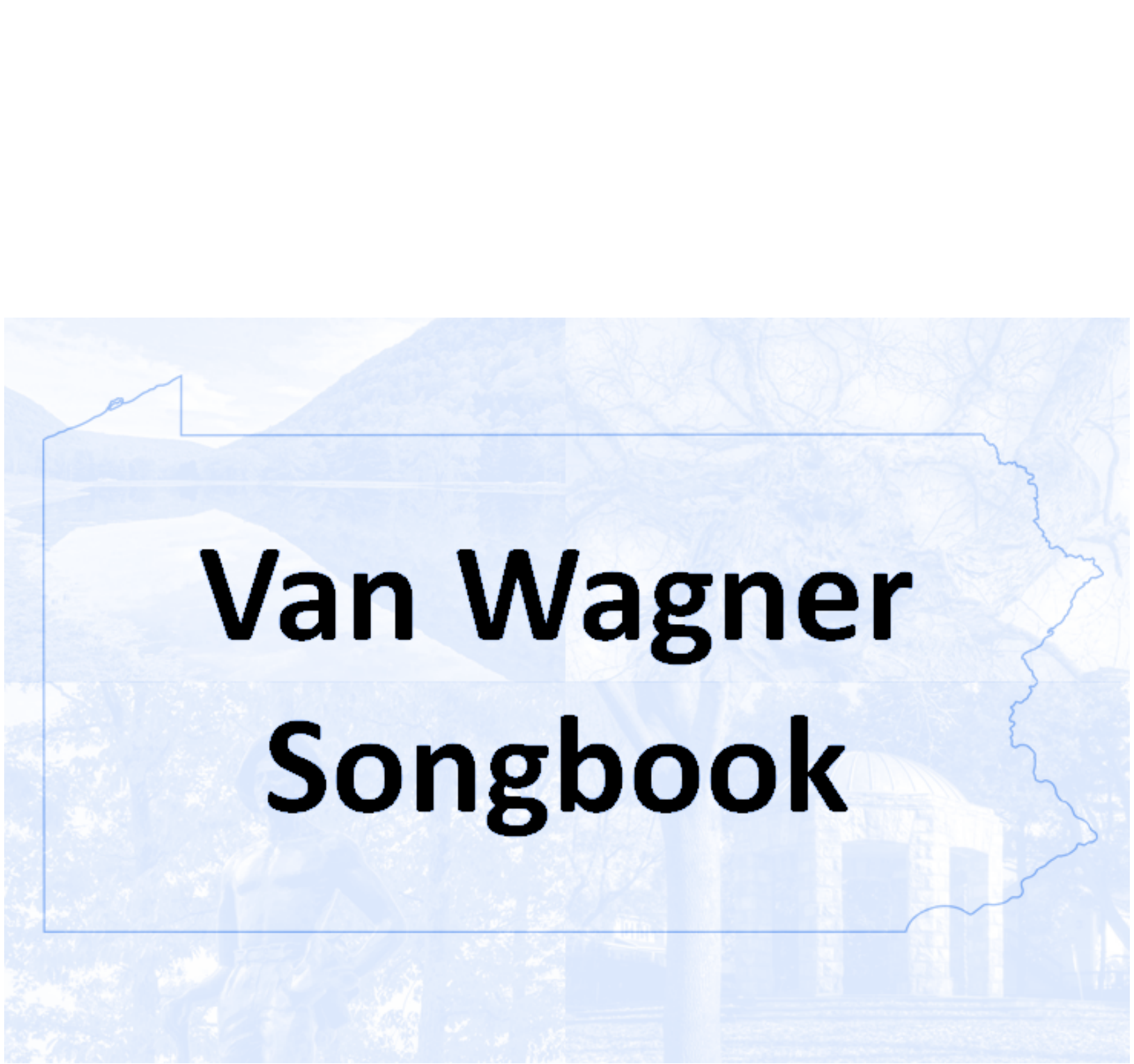




Van Wagner Songbook

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

Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner

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

Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner

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.

Summer of Hawks

The Flood Sessions: Four Days of Rain

Van Wagner
July 16, 2011

Album: In key of Am

Intro: Bm D (x2)

Chorus, Intro (x1)

Verse 1:

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.

Verse 4:

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)

Chorus:

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)

Verse 2:

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)

Verse 3:

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.

Van Wagner
February 2002

Intro: G---Em C D G

G D G C
If tonight I get called away, in the fog out on the highway
G D C
I'd have no choice but to go.
G D Em C
But I have to admit, I'm not quite cool with it.
G D C
There's so much I haven't done.

G -----Em C D G
If time could stand alone, and carry my life on.

G -----Em C D G
I just can't say amen, lord I don't want this prayer to end.

Some folks see a prayer, like a phone call in the air
But that doesn't work for me.
My prayer began, when I was born into this land.
Give me a life, true and free.

Some folks see a prayer, like a phone call in the air
But that doesn't work for me.
My prayer began, when I was born into this land.
Give me a life, true and free.

Bridge:

G D
I want to go to the mountains

G C D
I want to fish Kettle creek one more time.

G D
Give me one more Christmas dinner,

Em C
I want to hear my dad say grace one

D
more time.

Chorus

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.

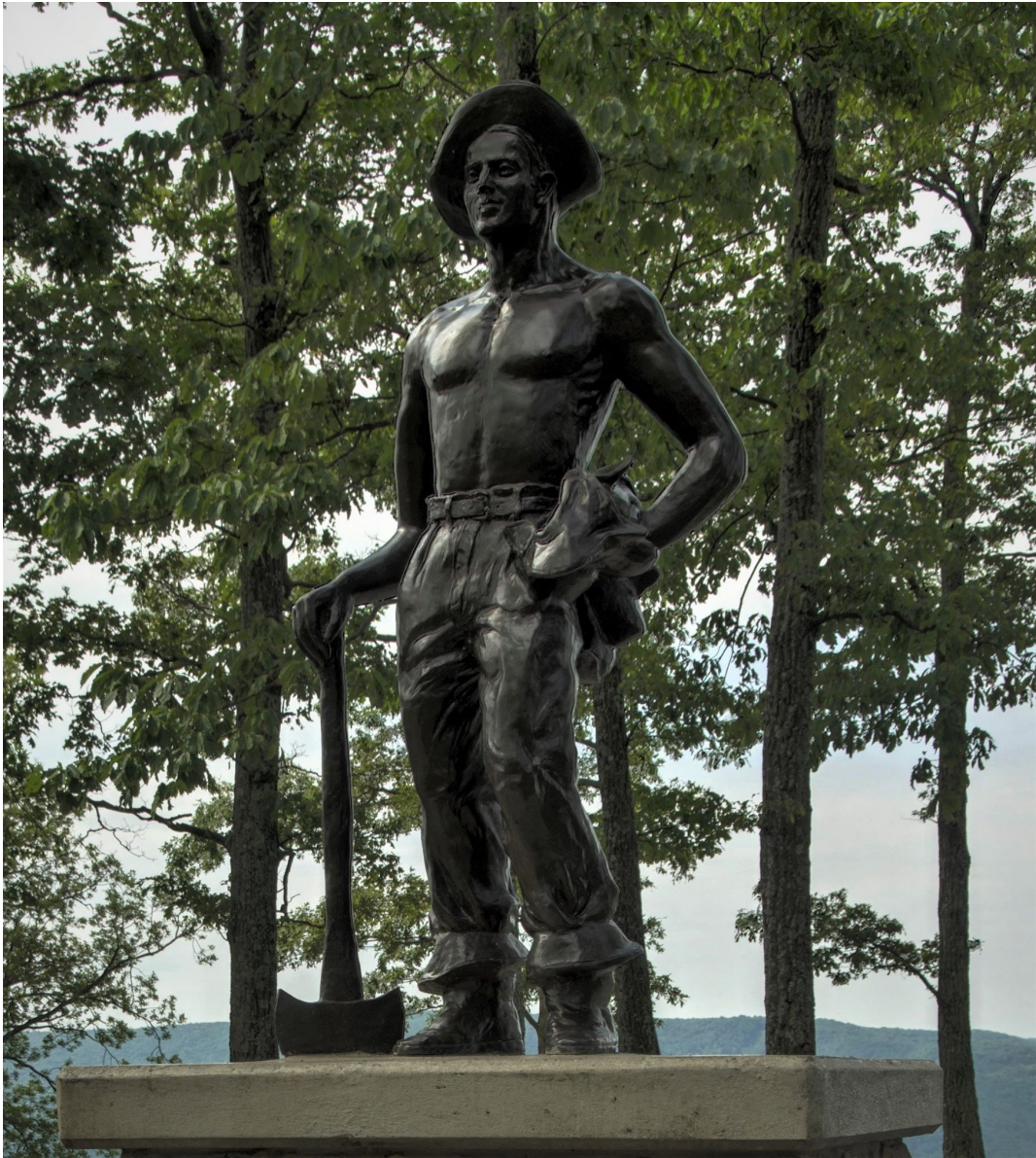
Chorus

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

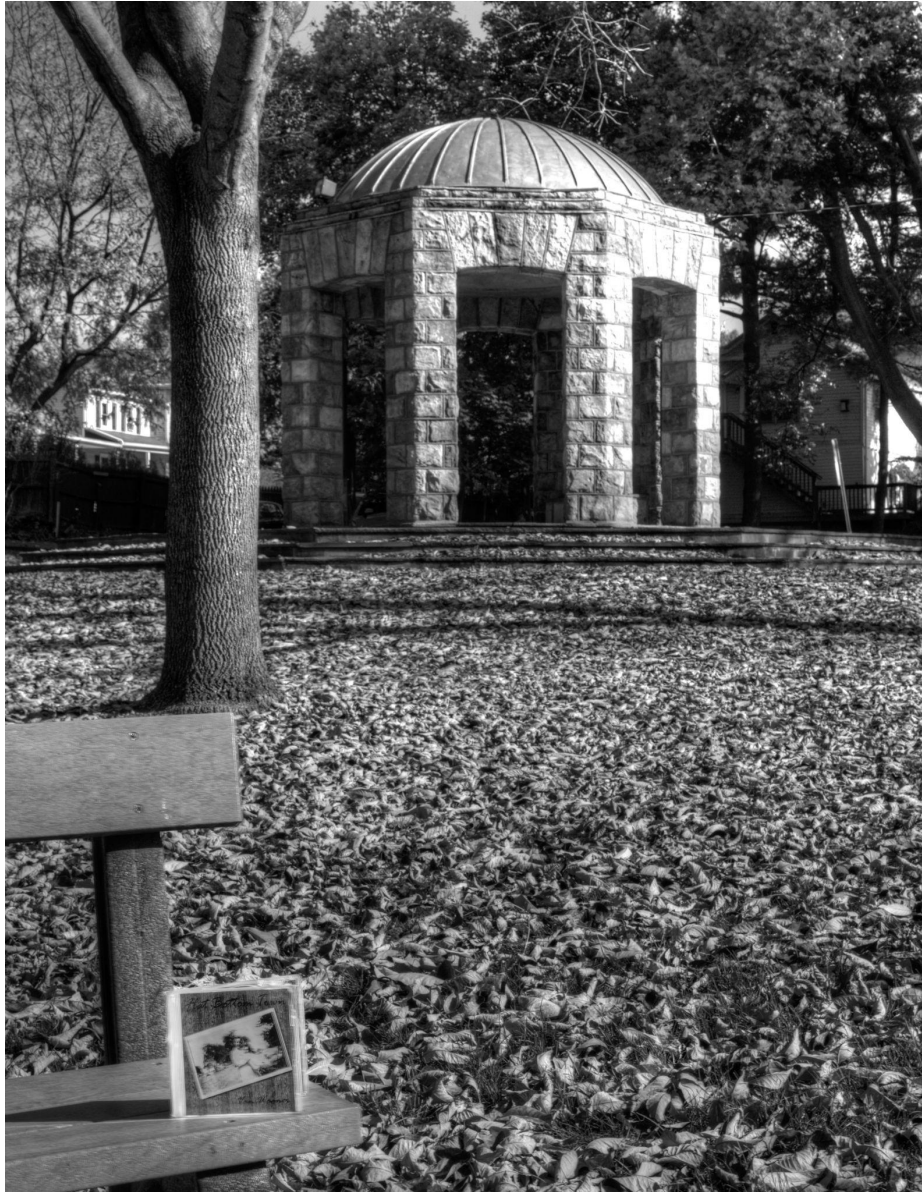
Bridge: Intro (x1)

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

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**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

Van Wagner
1999 - Dec. 24, 2002

Capo: 4th Fret

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.

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.

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

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	
<i>Intro riff</i>	
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

Van Wagner
February 1, 2000

Verse 1:

Chorus:

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

Outro: Verse chords



Van Wagner Songbook Vol. 11: A Mountain Man's Daydream

Assembled with permission of Van Wagner by fans of Van Wagner

Photo Credit: Alex Patterson
Last Updated: 8/12/2026

Nobody No More

Lost in the Mountains

Van Wagner

August 2010

Intro: C Am / F C F C / F G C

C Am

Nobody visits no more, nobody visits no more.

F C F C

They put in time at a funeral line

F G C

But nobody visits no more.

Nobody whittles no more, nobody whittles no more.

A piece of pine and a Swiss Army Knife

Nobody whittles no more.

Instrumental: Intro chords

Nobody writes no more, nobody writes no more.

A postage stamp from a good friend's hand

Nobody writes no more.

No one slows down no more, no one slows down no more.

We're all in a rush but a rush for what?

No one slows down no more.

Instrumental

No one unplugs no more, no one unplugs no more.

The honest feel of acoustic steel

No one unplugs no more.

Nobody farms no more, Nobody farms no more.

Inch by Inch row by row

Nobody farms no more.

Instrumental

Nobody talks no more, nobody talks no more.

Buttons and thumbs zeros and ones

Nobody talks no more.

Nobody fishes no more, nobody fishes no more.

Leaders and lines, spinners and flies

Nobody fishes no more.

Tuning: Standard

Capo: None or up a few frets

Instrumental x2

No one picks berries no more, no berry
picking no more.

2 in the pot and 1 in the mouth

No one picks berries no more.

Nobody cans no more, nobody cans no
more.

Jars and lids and boiling,

Nobody cans no more.

Instrumental

The Fire

Alone

Van Wagner
April 2003

Tuning: Standard
Capo: 4th fret

Intro: Verse chords

Verse 1:

G C G Em
I heard the news the other day Danville had a terrible blaze
G C G D
Smoke filled the streets they say and flames filled the sky.
G C G Em
Mill Street was lined with folks, hypnotized by the smoke
G C G D
Did their best not to choke as tears filled their eyes.

Chorus:

Em G C
Do you remember when the fire came and swallowed everything
G D
With that helpless feeling, it would never be the same?
Em G C
I swear there's nothing colder in this whole world
G D
Than standing by a fire as it takes its toll.

Instrumental: G C G Em
G C G D

Verse 2:

Was the summer of '93 in the hills of Centre County
That fire just missed me on the Piney Woody Hill.
In the ashes of the blaze a bible with open page,
"Not a flood but fire God says" Revelation's filled.

Chorus

Instrumental: Verse chords

Verse 3:

I think about the Kremser farm, fire reached out its arm
Took the house and left the barn, flames icy cold.
But the good neighbors rallied in and helped build a home again
They didn't let destruction win, now that'll warm your soul.

Chorus + Instrumental: Verse chords, then end on G

I Took It Hard

Only Passing Through

Van Wagner
December 2004

Intro: G C G (x2)

Verse 1:

G
Well I saw it on a t-shirt "Time's an invitation"
D
Took a closer look "Time's an invention"
Em
I'm always getting into things seeing what I want
C
It gets me into trouble like moonshine at 1.

G
Well I hope I'm not the only one, I hate to be alone.
D
Squandering my hours like water from a stone.
Em
It's often said I only listen to myself.
C G C G
Well ignorance is bliss, you ought to try it for yourself.

Chorus:

D
How did you take it
G C G
Oh, I took it hard.
C Em D
Is there any other way you'd expect?
C Em D
Is it still my hometown, won't ya check.
G C G
Oh, I took it hard.

Verse 2:

Try, try again, try one more time for luck
I'm so sick of trying and it's all for what?
Who am I impressing, walking this walk?
Next time I'll shut my mouth and let the guitar talk.

So come on little lady dance and dance with me.
I'm not the greatest dancer but I'm tall as a tree.
A few pints and music all that matters now
All my life a song has never let me down.

Tuning: Standard

Capo: None or 5th fret

Chorus

Instrumental: Verse chords

Verse 3:

I wake up to no change in fact today
seems worse.
Bad luck for breakfast, bad luck curse.
Bad luck in my coffee bad luck in my
bread.
But that's all been said before a
bluesman said it best.

Chorus

Wild Turkey

Woolrich Coat

Van Wagner

Nov. 5, 2008

Tuning: Standard

Capo: 5th fret

Intro: F C G (x4)

Chorus:

G D G
The turkey hunter has two shadows.
C G D
One from the sun and the other from the moon.
 G (walk down) Em
But the turkey has no shadow
G D G
Light comes down and just passes through.

Verse 1:

F C G F C G
Western Pennsylvania, it's a turkey hunter's dream.
F C G F C G
On the Alleghany Plateau, the hills of Cambria county.
F C G F C G
No matter where you travel, it's a rush just the same.
F C G F C G
It's something that is timeless, a hunter on the quest for game.

Chorus

Verse 2:

Head in the woods early, get your back to a log.
Let the sun come slowly, as your soul gets bathed in the fog.
It's early in the season, there's still frost on the crest.
A gobbler shakes the woods like thunder, your heart pounds in your chest.

Chorus

Instrumental: Intro chords

Verse 3:

Ben Franklin saw it early, there's a spirit in that bird.
For even non-believers can never quite find the words.
The color of the feathers, like a rainbow on a stream.
Just as soon as you see it, it fades back into the green.

Chorus + Instrumental

Van Wagner
Nov. 13, 2025

Intro: A (x8) / A G D A (x2)

A G D A
I spent about a week once, one night in Cheyenne
A G D A
I sat down at a card game, so I could play my hand.
D G A
Blowing through Wyoming, like a tumbleweed.
A G D A
I was hot for the aces. I had a few up my sleeve.

There were 7 card players, at the table to play
There were 7 chandeliers and a piano played.
When you deal in Cheyenne, you keep your eyes on the
cards.
You are waist deep in water, swimming with sharks.

D E
Poker ain't a game in Cheyenne
D E
You can lose it all with one hand

Instrumental: A G D A (x2)

I was raking it in, man I couldn't lose.
Aces in my sleeves, I had kings in my shoes.
Then I fumbled for a card, it fell out by the grate.
Then the waitress beside me, covered my fatal mistake.

I looked around the table, no one saw a thing.
The waitress smiled, she brought me tonic and gin.
I was back in the saddle, I was back in the game.
A slight of my hand, and I was winning again.

Tuning: Standard

At the end of it all, I had to find a way out.

The waitress was wise to my tricks,
there was no doubt.
She wanted her cut, I could see in
her eyes.
So I gathered my loot and I headed
outside.

I fumbled the keys to my car, as a gun
pressed my side.
She used no words, just her .35
I knew what she wanted, and it wasn't
just half.
She walked away slowly, with the
entire stash.

Chorus (x2)

The Pines of California

Modern Western Ballads

Van Wagner
Oct. 18, 2025

Tuning: Standard

Verse 1:

G
You can tell a lot about a pine tree by the cone that it makes
Em
You can tell a lot about a person by the friends that they
make
C
Others choose a path that keeps them alone
D
Sometimes there are trees that make no cones

People are like that, man they're high and they're low
They're holding on to stories you're never gonna know.
Their roots go wide and their roots go deep
They're holding onto secrets you know they're gonna keep

Chorus:

G
Oh those Pines
D
Those Pines
Em C
Those Pines
G D G
Oh the Pines of California they grow high.

Instrumental: G Em C D

Verse 2:

The Sierra Nevadas where the Sugar Pine grows
Up at the half dome where the Yellowstone flows
There's Cottonwoods and Aspen, but the pines ruled the
roost
Now and then there comes a fire that turns their seeds loose

Microburst from the Santa Anna winds
After a storm they'll grow again.
The next generation from the cone they are freed
This California forest, it started from seed.

Chorus

Instrumental

Verse 3:

There are secrets in those mountains
in that piney air
Waterfalls and caves and cinnamon
bears
The sequoias and cedars standing in
time
While humans crawl like ants,
marching in a line

Chorus (x2)

Smoke on the Mountain

Smoke on the Mountain

Van Wagner
Aug. 28, 2025

Tuning: Standard

Intro: G

Refrain:

G
There's smoke on the mountain
C
There's smoke in the evening
Am C D
Stinging your eyes and filling your lungs
G
It's a smell you know well
C
Like sheets in a motel
Am C D
One takes you home and the other far from

Verse 1:

D G
It's a high old mountain if you reach the top
C G D
It can break your heart, it can make you stop.
D G
The wind blows hard and the wind blows cold
C G D G
It'll rob your bones and freeze your soul.

Refrain

Verse 2:

Hey hey Chickadee, and the Nuthatch too.
I know you hear me because I can hear you.
I've lived on this mountain and I live here some more
Just think of me as the guitar next door.

Refrain

Instrumental: Verse chords

Verse 3:

I can hear the road calling, and I'm
bound to go.
Maybe the city or the Atlantic shore.
I'll be missing my home and this
mountain smoke
The dust of the city just makes me
choke

Refrain

Outro: Chords of first half of verse

A Mountain Man's Dream

A Mountain Man's Dream

Van Wagner

Dec. 14, 2015

Tuning: Standard

Intro: D

Verse 1:

D Em
Today I walked on the mountain
G A D
In woods I never have seen.
D Em
I've spent my life on this mountain
G A D
Living a mountain man's dream

Chorus:

Bm G D
A mountain man dreams of good country
Bm G D A
Land with plenty to spare
D Em
There's purity in the mountains
G A D
In the trees, the rocks, the air.

Instrumental: D Em / G A D

Verse 2:

Travelers have crossed this mountain
In the time before horse and road.
Shikellamy, he camped on this mountain
Underneath great tall trees above

Chorus

Instrumental

Verse 3:

There's places all around me
Never seen by anyone's eyes
Some loggers, some hunters, some hikers.
But mostly they just passed on by.

Chorus

Instrumental

Verse 3:

Give me 40 more years on this
mountain
40 more years on this ground.
I'll keep taking the road less travelled.
Searching for things to be found.

Chorus

Instrumental

Cornerstones

The Fringe

Van Wagner
Sept. 13, 2013

Tuning: Standard
Capo: 5th or 4th fret

Intro: G

Chorus:

G Em
You don't want that dog son, you don't want that dog.
G D
He's the runt of the litter and he won't make it long.
G Em
I believe in the unlucky and I live my life that way.
G D G
The cornerstones in my life other people cast away.

Verse 1:

Em G
Picked out a dog, a cocker spaniel pup.
D
They said he'd be lucky to make it a year.
Em G
But I've come to learn when you get a pet
D G
You don't choose them, it's they that choose you.

Chorus

Verse 2:

On this guitar, the one I'm pickin' on
\$100 used Conn the cheapest in the store.
People shake their heads and say "where's your Martin son?"
My guitar has 6 strings does your Martin have any more?

Chorus

Verse 3:

200 grand hard miles on this truck.
I shove a penny in the radio just to turn it on.
But it drives strong and many miles to go.
It speaks to my condition, for I got rust in my soul.

Chorus

You Belong and Always Will

Smoke on the Mountain

Van Wagner
March 11, 2025

Tuning: Standard

Intro: Chorus chords

Chorus

Verse 1:

D
It's a charmed life to call this home
G
A charmed life and a blessing
D
I hear the rippling waters flow
A G D
It's something I was missing, something I just know.

Instrumental

Chorus

D
People say life in the woods
G
Is a life that is simple.
D
But life is hard no matter where you are
A G D
As sure as apple dimples, and sure as winter snow.

Chorus:

G (walk down) D
You can hear the water flow
G (walk down) A
You can chase the winter snow
G (walk down) D
Like the sandstone in the hills.
G A D
You belong and always will.

Instrumental: Intro

Verse 2:

When you thirst for something more
Something more refreshing
Find yourself a mountain spring
Where the water comes up gushing, water comes up cold.

The sun goes down and evening woods
Fill the forest fully
Like an old familiar voice you know
It's part of your family, part of who you are.