



A collection of love locks on a railing spanning a bridge on a river in Argentina. (Photo courtesy wikimediacommons/Dennis Jarvis)

I was fishing a stretch of the Lake Fork of the Gunnison River, near Lake City, when I came to a foot bridge and decided the water was easier to fish from the other side. On the bridge there was a cable following the bridge span. On this cable there were about a dozen padlocks, not locking anything, just locked on the cable.

The locks seemed to serve no useful purpose, and I figured some kids probably put the locks on there, for reasons only known to the kids. Turns out these locks are love locks. If you never heard of that, don't feel bad. I never heard of it either, and deep down, I wish I never heard of it now.

My wife of almost half a century will proudly attest to the fact that I do not possess a romantic bone in my body. I celebrate anniversaries and special days but romance just does not fit my personality. With that said, don't go looking for love locks with my name on them.

A love lock is a padlock that couples in love



Tips from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

lock to a bridge, fence, gate, monument, or a foot bridge over a river, to symbolize their love. Usually, the people place their name or initials and date on the lock, secure the lock in place, and throw away the key (like in the river) to symbolize their unbreakable love.

This is similar to the tradition where lovers carve their initials in a tree. I don't think there is a grove of aspens anywhere that does not have some type of carving on at least one of the trees. Sometimes people do it just to prove they were there. I might add that it is illegal in all national

forests and considered vandalism on private property. Besides that, nobody else wants to see it. Go carve the initials in your house or car if you feel like it is important.

Love locks have a history. One *New York Times* report dates the history back to World War I at a bridge where a local school mistress named Nada fell in love with a Serbian officer named Relja. They used to meet at the bridge until he went off to war in Greece, where he met someone else and fell in love with the new woman.

Poor Nada never recovered from the blow, and reportedly died of a broken heart. Other young women from the same town, started placing padlocks, with the names of their lovers and their own on them, on the bridge where Nada and Relja used to meet. From there, the tradition has spread across Europe.

Another version of history credits the practice to ancient China. Lovers would lock a padlock on a chain or gate and throw

away the key, symbolically locking their love forever. Now there are locks from Moscow to Rome on fences and bridges. Certain locales even build special places for these locks to be placed. One place is in Argentina, on a railing along a river.

The tradition gained popularity because of the 2007 Italian film *Ho Voglia di Te*, adapted from Federico Moccia's novel of the same name. In it, a couple in love attach a lock to a Roman bridge to symbolize their eternal love.

Like everything else, some folks have crossed the line. A bridge in Paris partially collapsed under the weight of hundreds of thousands of locks, and a movement is underway to outlaw the practice. Closer to home, New York's Department of Transportation announced a fine for attaching locks to the Brooklyn Bridge because it was becoming too costly to remove them.

Grand Canyon National Park issued a stern warning about love locks, stating, "Love

is strong, but it is not as strong as our bolt cutters." The park routinely uses those cutters to remove locks from fences overlooking views of layered red rock. The Park Service considers the practice littering, and a form of graffiti, and want people to stop.

The park also wants people to understand how the little love locks threaten California condors, a rare and endangered species. After attaching the love lock to the fence, the lovers typically toss the keys as a gesture of enduring love. In the Grand Canyon, the lovers often throw the keys into the canyon, where the birds, which like shiny metal objects, ingest them.

A social media post from the park stated, "Condors are not meant to digest metal and many times cannot pass these objects." The post contained an X-ray image of a condor with coins lodged in its digestive tract. The bird underwent surgery according to the post.

If you are out padding around in the great outdoors, and run into some of these padlocks, at least you now know what they represent and how they got there. Personally, I don't like the idea of leaving markers, carvings, or other symbols, to show you were there at a certain time. I also don't like the love lock tradition, and my wife and I never placed a lock anywhere as a symbol. We wear wedding rings instead.

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