

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO FUNDAMENTAL EDITING 2023 EDITION

Premium Photography Guide
Written by Kent DuFault



CONTENTS

	Foreword	p.3		
01	About this Guide	p.6	04	Lightroom p.90
02	Opening a .jpeg Image in the Camera Raw Processing Window	p.11	05	Elements p.123
	Photoshop	p.13	06	Adobe Elements Bonus Material! p.156
	Elements	p.19		
			07	Final p.164
03	The Fundamental Editing List Using Photoshop 2023	p.21		

FOREWORD

This guide has been updated to reflect changes in the Adobe editing software. The principles still apply to older versions of Adobe products as well as other editing options. Focus on the taught principle versus where you will find the tools. With each software update, the tool locations or names might change, but the principles of editing are still applicable.

Note: I will be working on an Apple computer. If you are working on a Windows PC computer, the steps are the same with a couple of different keystrokes. If I say use the Apple 'Command' key, on a Windows unit, then it is the 'Control' key. If I say use the Apple 'Option' key, then it is the Windows 'Alt' key. The Space bar and Shift keys work similarly.

Digital photography is so intrinsically tied to the editing process that you can't really consider doing one without doing the other.

I know many new photographers try and resist this at first. I was guilty of that myself.

And then, there is the other type of photographer who becomes so involved in the post-processing aspect that they don't give the shooting side its fair due.

We've all done that, haven't we? We took a shot that did not work out and tried to save it in post-production. Am I right?

This guide will not be about saving a shot or turning an image into some funky psychedelic piece of modern artwork.

The subject of post-processing is very in-depth. It can be quite overwhelming.

Photzy and I have decided to provide you with several guides on post-processing that will address particular issues about the subject of post-processing, the idea being that it will be easier for you to digest in smaller bites.

A lot of photographers seem confused about 'basic editing.'

What exactly does basic editing mean?

Basic editing includes edits that aren't going to fundamentally change the concept of the original photograph. So, I'm not talking about converting to monochrome (B&W), HDR, massive cloning, multi-layering, masking, or any of those techniques.

No. I'm talking about the steps required to take your original digital file, as it came out of the camera, and turn it into the best 'photographic' image file that it can be.

I've made up my list of basic edits, and it's longer than you might think. I have fifteen items on my Fundamental Editing List.

Other photographers might have more or less; I don't know. This is my list, and I think you'll benefit from learning it because it will help you to develop your own list and workflow process.

Key Lesson: Terminology - 'Workflow' is a word that you'll hear bantered about in the post-production world. Being a long-term photographer (long before the digital era), I remember when I first heard about

workflow. It was a mysterious word that had no value to a film photographer. Yet, everyone was making noise about it, and I wondered what the big deal was. I knew what the word meant: the order in which we would do our post-processing steps. In the beginning, I didn't understand the importance of 'order' when it came to post-processing. Suppose you develop a repeatable process in your Fundamental Editing List and stick to it. In that case, you'll tend to get predictable results. If you don't... you may still have good results... and then again, you may not. Developing a workflow will make digital photography easier and more predictable.

I remember when noise reduction software first came into the photographic world. Everyone had an opinion as to when you should apply noise reduction.

There are still ongoing arguments about that very subject.

If there is one truism about photographers, it's the fact that we're very opinionated. Put ten of us in a room to solve a photographic problem and you'll be lucky if two of us agree.

I developed my workflow and Fundamental Editing List after years of working on my photographs and also managing the retouching production facility for a chain of photo studios.

By doing these edits in the order in which I present them, I believe it will give you the best photographic product while maintaining the original intent of the photograph.

01


ABOUT THIS GUIDE



001 – Photograph by Kent DuFault

When you complete this Premium Guide, you should be able to do the following:

- Know and understand the differences between Photoshop, Lightroom, and Elements in basic image editing.
- Gain an operational understanding of workflow.
- Learn how to open a RAW file (in all three programs) as well as why you should do the basic edits on that file in the RAW processing window (Photoshop and Elements).
- Learn how to evaluate a Histogram, check for clipping, and set the highlights/shadows for a maximum range of Dmax (range of tone) without losing detail.
- Learn to evaluate and adjust color temperature (white balance).
- Learn the what, why, and where of the 'tint' adjustment.
- Gain insight into the 'clarity' adjustment, what it does, and why.
- Learn how to adjust vibrance, because digital files inherently lack vibrance.
- Learn to adjust saturation while remembering that a little goes a long way.
- Learn the when, where, how, and why of cropping.
- Learn about sharpening and if you should or shouldn't use it.
- Learn about noise reduction and my take on this long-standing argument of when and how much.
- Understand and use a vignette and the De-haze adjustment tool to improve composition.
- Learn how to fine-tune an image with the Adjustment Brush.

 **Key Lesson:** When using Photoshop, or Elements, the best location to accomplish your Fundamental Editing List is in the RAW processing window. Why? I say this because the edits are then non-destructive, meaning your original file is always available. The software creates a metadata file that notes any changes you make to the original file. This means that if you change your mind later, it's a lot easier as you can actually reset the file back to its original condition. Every edit that we're going to discuss can also be accomplished **within** Photoshop and Elements. However, **within** those programs, once you've completed your edits and saved the file, the history of what you did is lost. That is unless you are using the Smart Objects feature. I don't use Smart Objects, so I'm not going to discuss them in this guide. I prefer the ACR window for editing. However, if you are a person who moves their work around to different Adobe programs such as Illustrator, or you like to do a lot of creative editing and filtering in Photoshop, then you might want to explore Smart Objects. Lightroom works a little differently. It also keeps a metadata file on every image you work on within the program. **Here is a little tip that you may not be aware of. When working in Photoshop or Elements, you can open a .jpeg file in the RAW processing window; it doesn't have to be a RAW file. Doing so gives you the same advantage of allowing the program to 'keep notes for you.'** I'll have more on that further in the guide.

Let's peek at the items on my Fundamental Editing List.

- Opening the image
- Crop
- Noise reduction
- Global exposure adjustment
- Clipping on the shadow end – Black Point
- Clipping on the highlight end – White Point
- Color temperature
- Color tint
- Clarity
- Vibrance
- Saturation
- Effects – vignette
- Dehaze
- Localized exposure and sharpening adjustment with the masking brush tool
- Global sharpening

What are we hoping to accomplish when we complete the Fundamental Editing List?

I believe that in basic editing, there are three goals.

1. Basic edits should take your original concept designed in the camera and bring them to life within the digital realm. You see, digital files do not record the world as our eyes see it. So, basic editing restores depth, color, saturation, contrast, etc., to something closer to our original vision.
2. Basic edits should make your file as 'printable' as possible. If you were to go to a photo printer and have a print made from your original file as it emerged from the camera, chances are the image would not look very good. The basic edits whip your file into shape so that you would get the best possible photographic print.
3. Basic edits should be used to fine-tune your composition.

Self-Check Quiz

1. True or False: Will the Fundamental Editing List help you clone out a telephone pole and numerous power lines from your image?
2. True or False: Is Kent's Fundamental Editing List the definitive answer on what order you should complete your basic edits?
3. True or False: Everyone knows that noise reduction should be accomplished first in a Fundamental Editing List workflow.
4. True or False: You cannot do basic edits on a .jpeg file in the RAW processing window.
5. True or False: Lightroom does not keep metadata files, so all of your basic edits are permanently lost once you save the file and close the program.
6. Name one of the three goals you wish to accomplish when working through your Fundamental Editing List.

Recommended Reading:

- [How to Improve a Wildlife Photograph with Post-Processing](#)
- [Using Post-Production to Improve a Composition](#)

Recommended Videos:

- [Fixing a Photograph in Post – Baby Ducks](#)
- [Fixing a Photograph in Post – Woman on a Bridge](#)

I will walk you through all fifteen edits on my Fundamental Editing List using Adobe Products: Photoshop, Lightroom, and Elements.

Suppose you don't use any of these programs. In that case, you'll still learn numerous core concepts that you can transfer to whatever editing program you use.

Also, this is very important: Read all three sections, even if you only use one of the three programs. I'm only human, and I might divulge some tidbit of important information in one section that I forget to include in another.

 [I want you to download this image so that you can work along with me.](#)

02

**OPENING A .JPEG IMAGE IN THE CAMERA RAW
PROCESSING WINDOW**



002 – Photograph by Kent DuFault

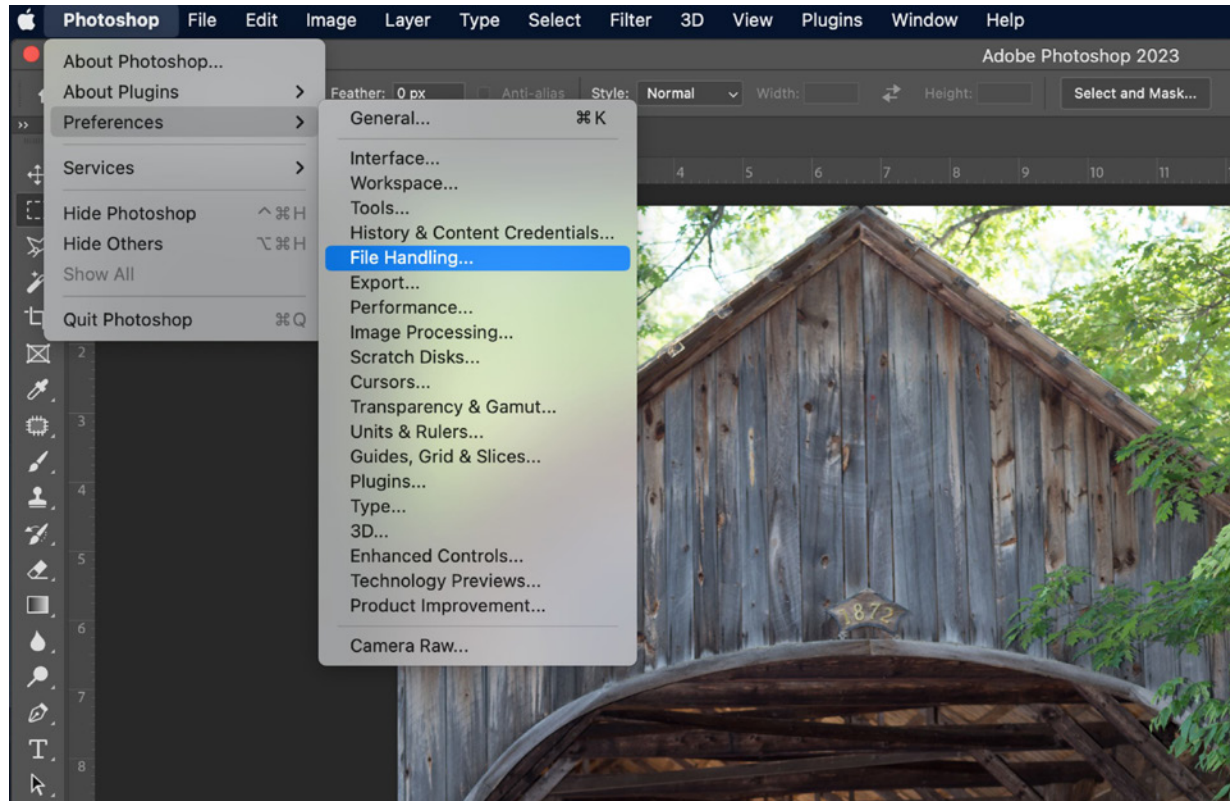
This is the sample image that we will be working on together. As you can see from the 'Before and After' (Image 002), the photograph has been improved visually, technically, and aesthetically without altering the original concept of the photograph. This constitutes basic editing.

⚠ Important Information: The image that you downloaded is an un-retouched .jpeg. It was generated directly from the RAW file I will work on. When doing your work, I recommend working with the RAW file whenever possible. This is especially true when you are doing work professionally or if you intend to print your images. If you simply upload the image to the Internet, a .jpeg is fine. Many photographers don't realize this, but the Internet limits the color and clarity of your image files. It doesn't matter what you do on your end; some color and clarity will be lost to the end user (via the Internet limitations). That being said, always create the best original file you can because you never know when someone might contact you asking for the original so they can purchase some rights, and put it on a billboard!

Since you will be working on a .jpeg file, I want to ensure you know how to open it in the Camera Raw Processing Window using Photoshop or Elements. With Lightroom, it doesn't matter, as the interface is the same regardless of what file format you're working with.

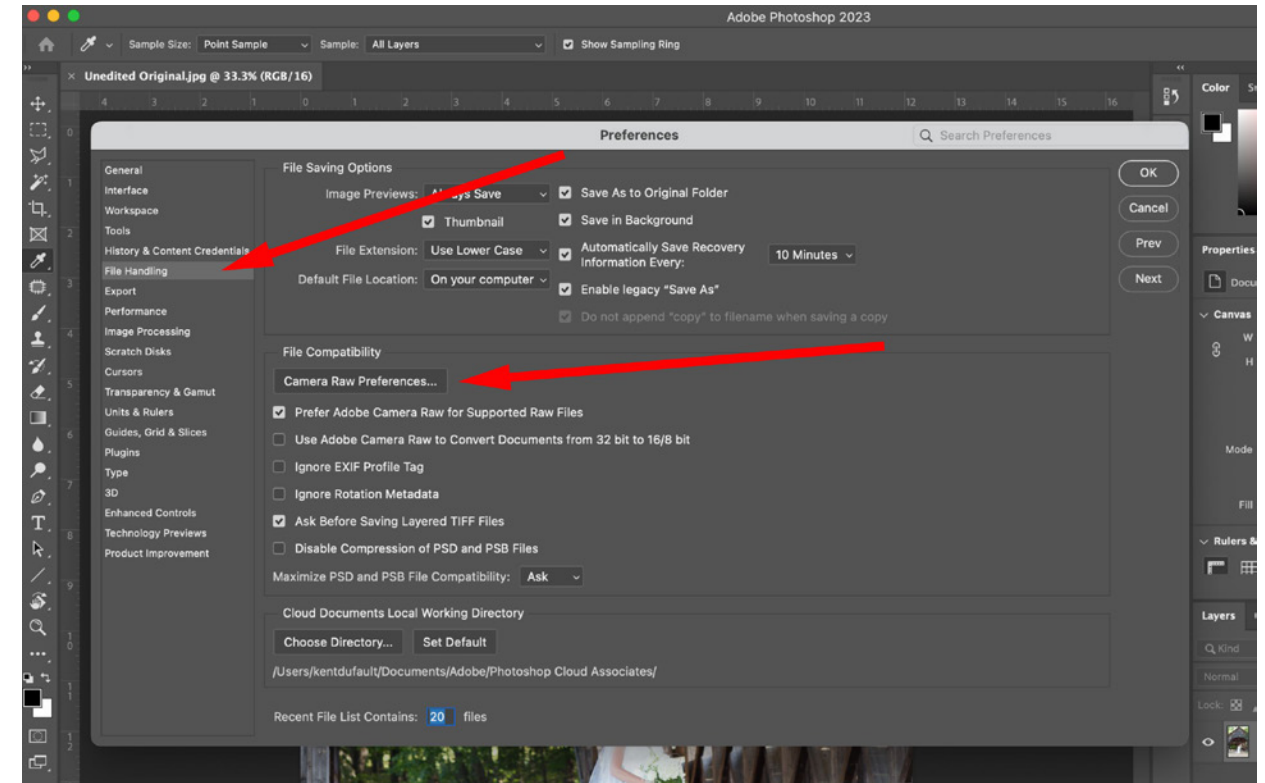
PHOTOSHOP 2023

Step One – Open the Preferences dropdown menu and select File Handling.



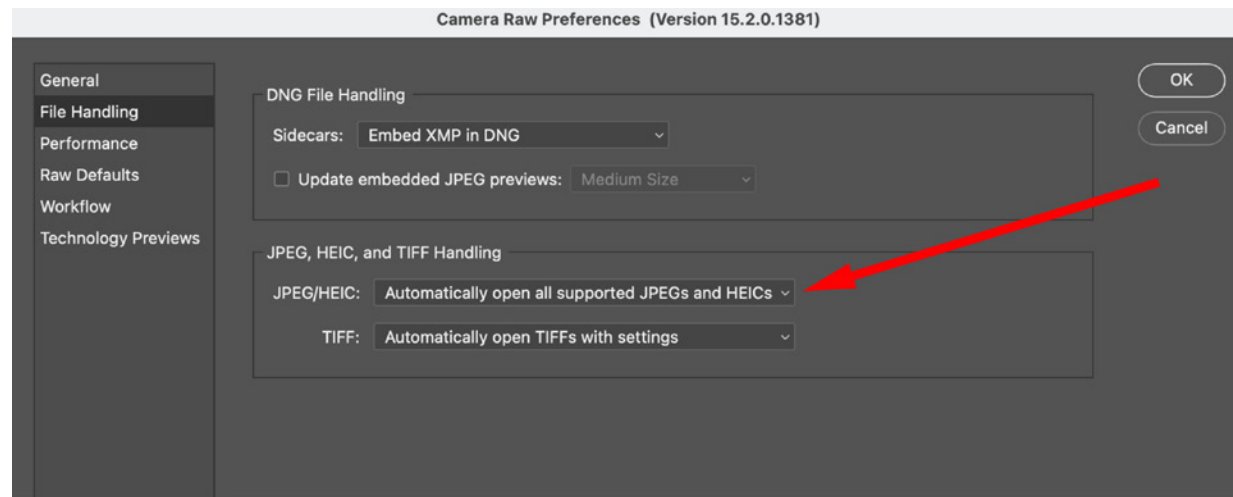
003 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Step Two – Click the File Handling and Camera Raw Preferences Dialog Box.



004 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

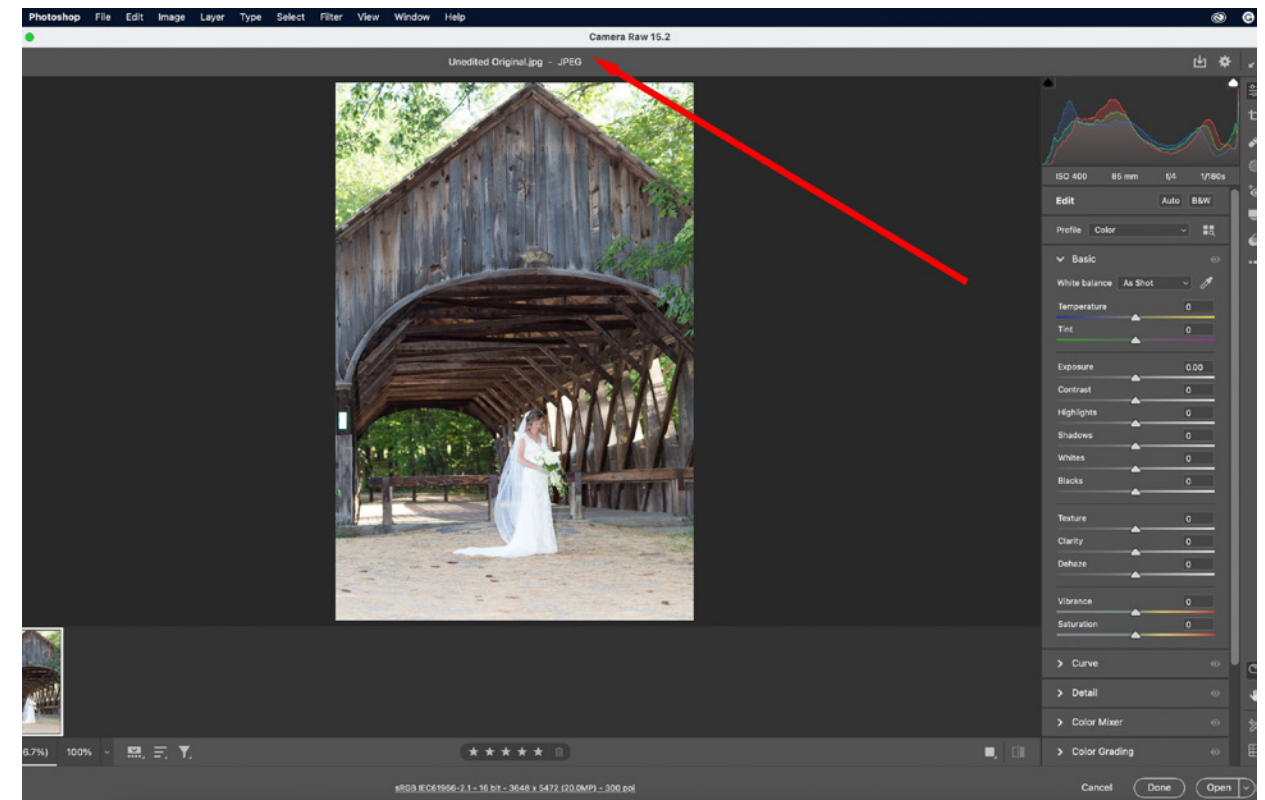
Step Three – Select 'Automatically open all supported JPEGs and HEICS.'



005 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault


Step Four – Close all dialog boxes.

Now... whenever you open a supported .jpeg or HEIC file, it will automatically open in the Camera Raw Processing Window!




006 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

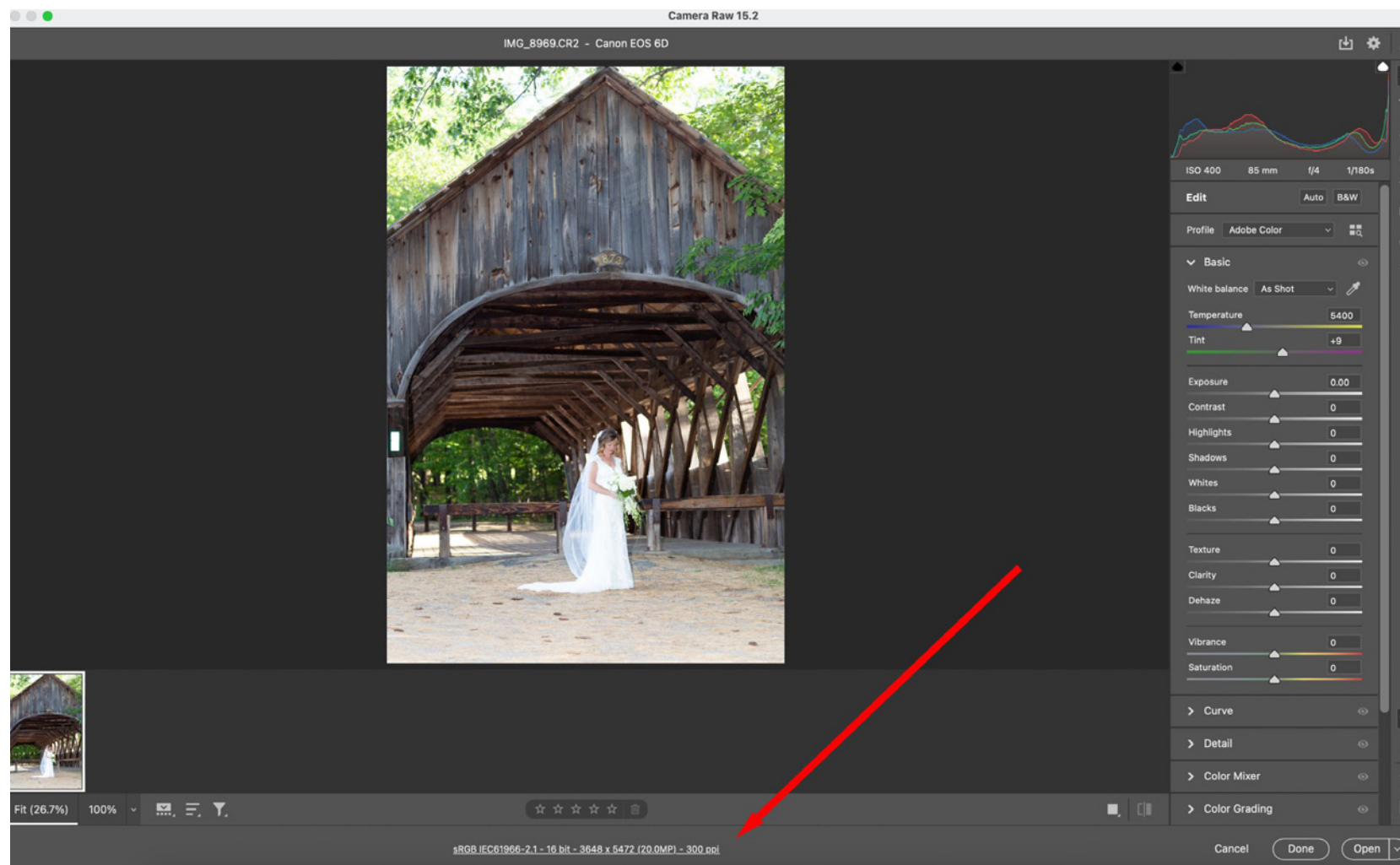
When the file opens in the Camera Raw Processing Window, you can see that you're working on a .jpeg rather than a RAW file by looking at the top of the window.

 **Key Lesson:** If you can open a .jpeg file in the Camera Raw Processing Window, then why worry about shooting a RAW file to begin with? You have access to all of the same tools. What's the benefit? A RAW file is completely unprocessed, and it contains all the information that your camera model is capable of recording. A .jpeg file is 'influenced' by the camera menu options. Let's say, for example, on a previous shoot, you set the color saturation adjustment on your camera to the highest possible setting. You did this because you were shooting landscapes. However, you forgot to reset that saturation setting, and now you're photographing a bridal portrait. Those camera biases will be imprinted right into the .jpeg file, and they might make your basic editing job far more complicated, even if you're using the Camera Raw Processing Window. The second reason to go with a RAW file is this: a .jpeg file is not a lossless format. Whenever a .jpeg file is opened, altered, saved, and closed, it loses some resolution. Over time, that loss of resolution can become noticeable.

- Start with a RAW file format whenever possible.
- Complete the Fundamental Editing List in the Camera Raw Processing Window for maximum flexibility.
- Convert your processed RAW file into a .jpeg for use on the Internet or for a photo lab.
- If you only have a .jpeg file, it's still better to process the Fundamental Editing List in the Camera Raw Processing Window.

 **Key Lesson:** If reading this saves you even once, it will be worth the price of this guide. When you open image files in the Camera Raw Processing Window, you can change the resolution setting. However, **it does not automatically reset for the next photo you open.** This is another reason why it's essential to have a workflow. **In step one, you will double-check the resolution setting when completing the Fundamental Editing List in the Camera Raw Processing Window.** BUT! What if you forget? What if you make your Fundamental Editing List in the Camera Raw Processing Window with a lower resolution, and then open the image file in Photoshop, and do all kinds of additional editing without remembering to reset the resolution? What if you did that with an entire shoot? **Don't laugh! It's happened to me.**

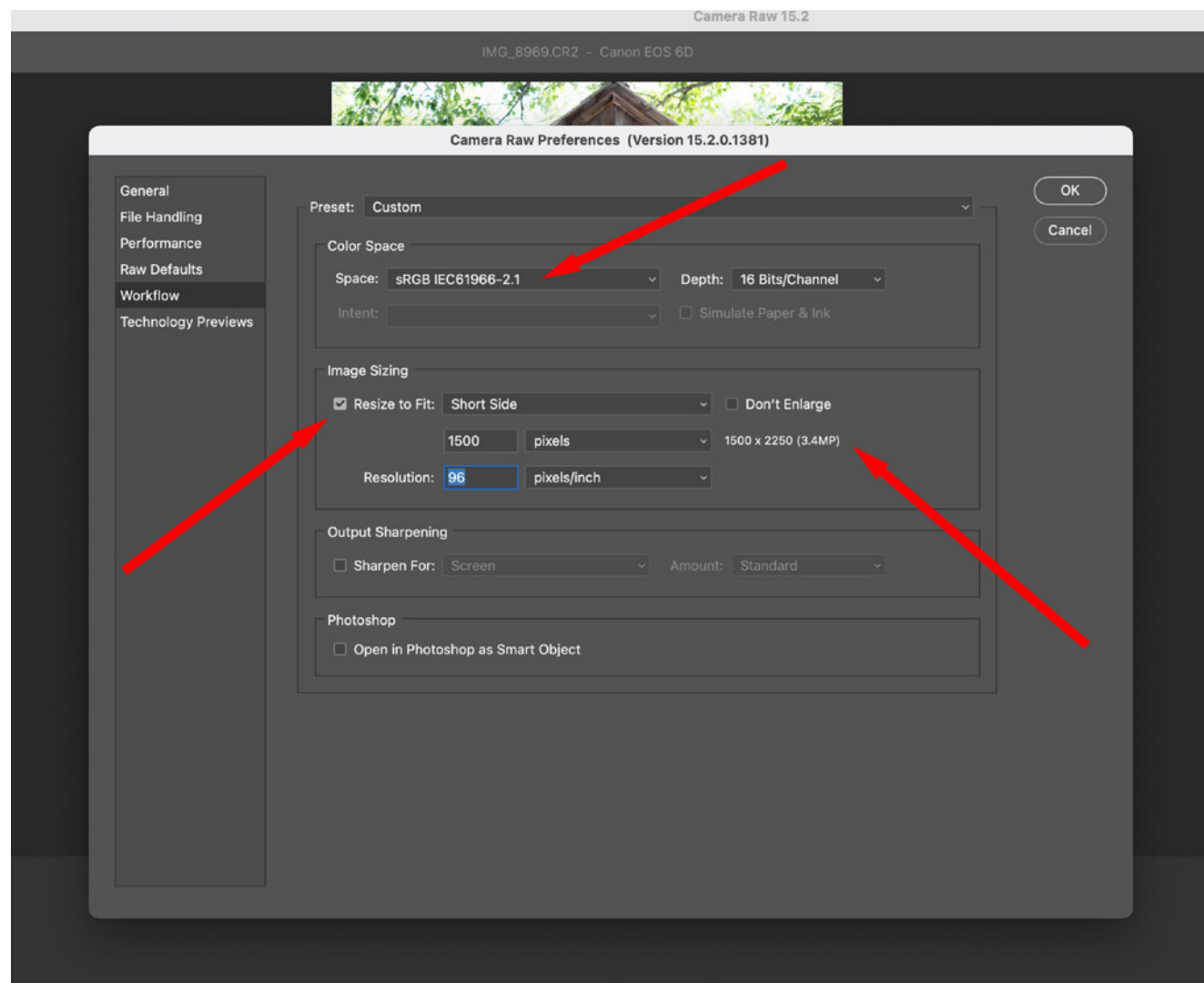
Let me show you what I'm talking about.



007 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Make sure to reset this back to nominal for the largest resolution after opening an image with a lower setting!

The red arrow in Reference 007 points to the resolution setting for this file. At this point, the resolution is set at the maximum file size of 20.0 MP. However, suppose I wanted a smaller file to open in Photoshop. In that case, it's easy to change the setting by clicking on this link and modifying it before opening the image. **But I must remember to reset it after I'm done.**




008 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

By clicking on the link, a Workflow Options dialog box opens. In Reference 008, you can see where I have reduced the image size to 3.4 MP. Why would I ever want to do that?

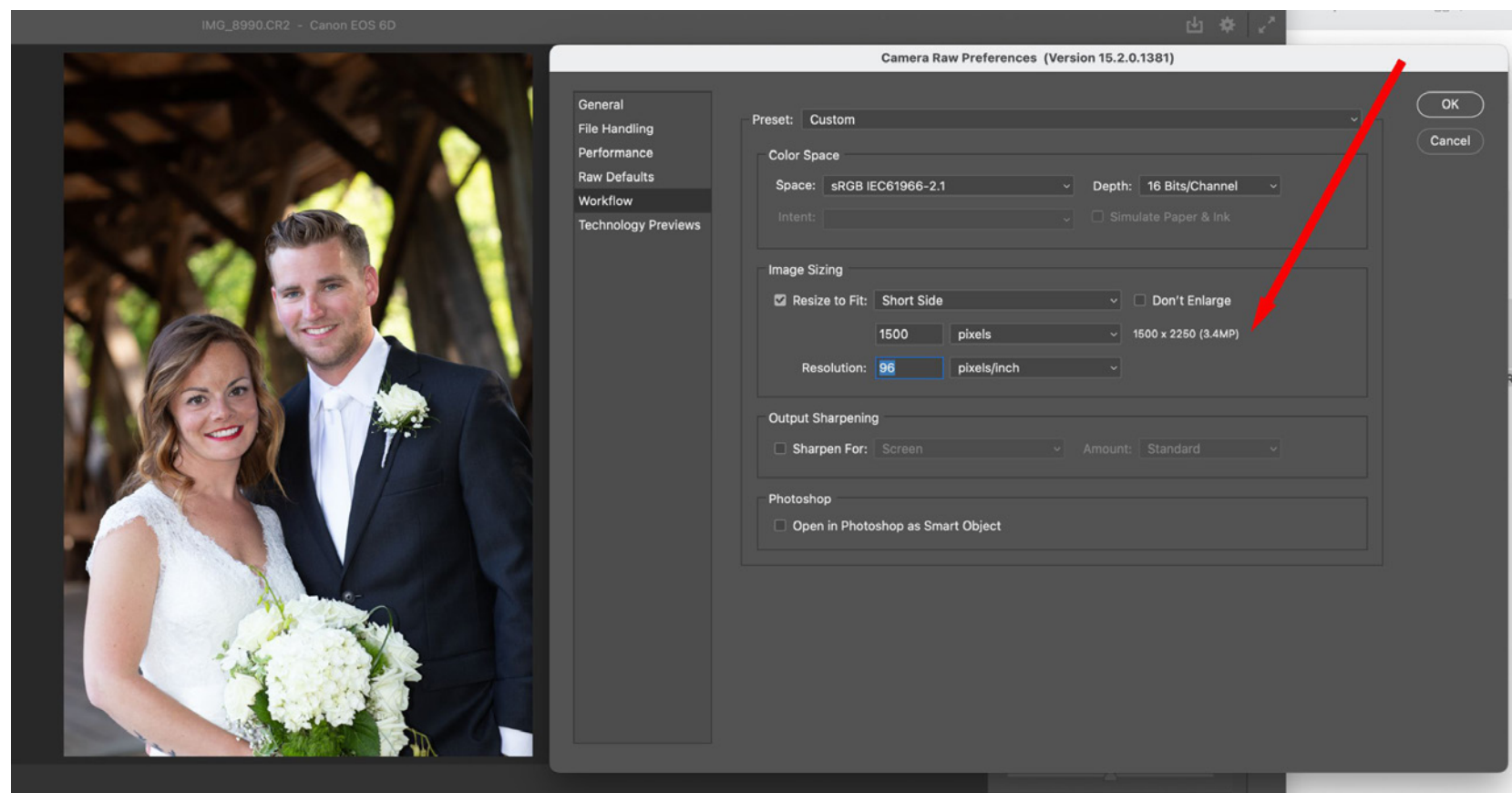
Perhaps I would like to email a proof to a client. Or upload a sample photo to my website. The point is you can change it, and it's an easy way to resize your file while keeping the original file intact. But what happens to the following photograph that you attempt to open in the Camera Raw Processing Window? We will look at that in Reference 009.

(I'm going to just briefly mention something here: Color Space. Unless you are doing your own printing on your own fine art color printer, you are best to use the sRGB color space. The entire online photo industry revolves around sRGB. The whole Internet is sRGB. Every photo lab I've ever worked with used sRGB (or their private color profile). I'm sure some of you will argue with me about this, going on about Adobe RGB or ProPhoto RGB... blah, blah, blah. But consider this: you're getting this advice from a guy who managed a million-dollar-a-year photo production facility.)

 **Recommended Reading:** [Every Technical Thing You Could Possibly Want to Know About Color Space](#)

If you're one of those people who love engulfing themselves in technical data, I recommend the above article.

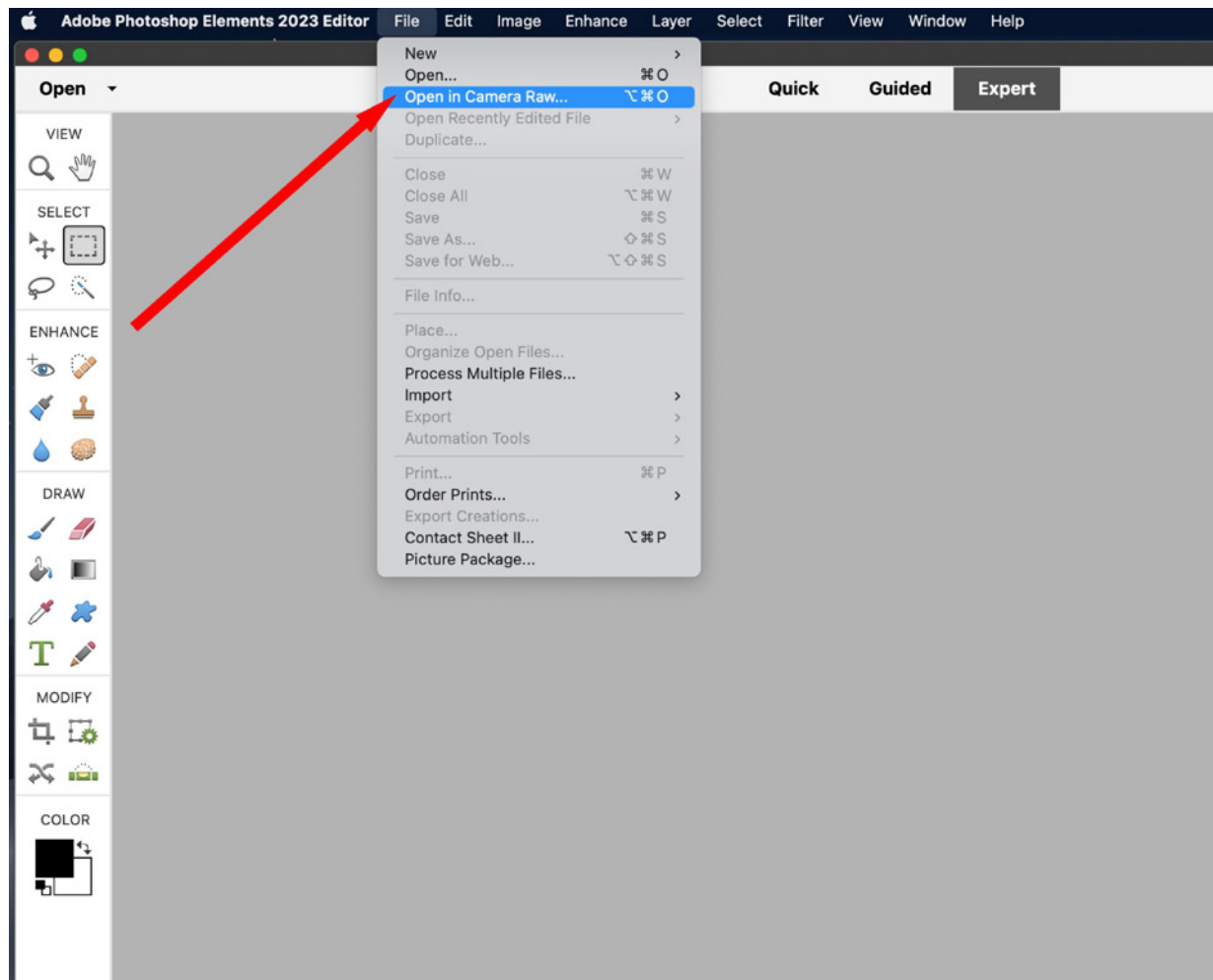
If you love taking photographs and NOT engulfing yourself in technical data, follow my advice and stick with the sRGB color space.



009 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

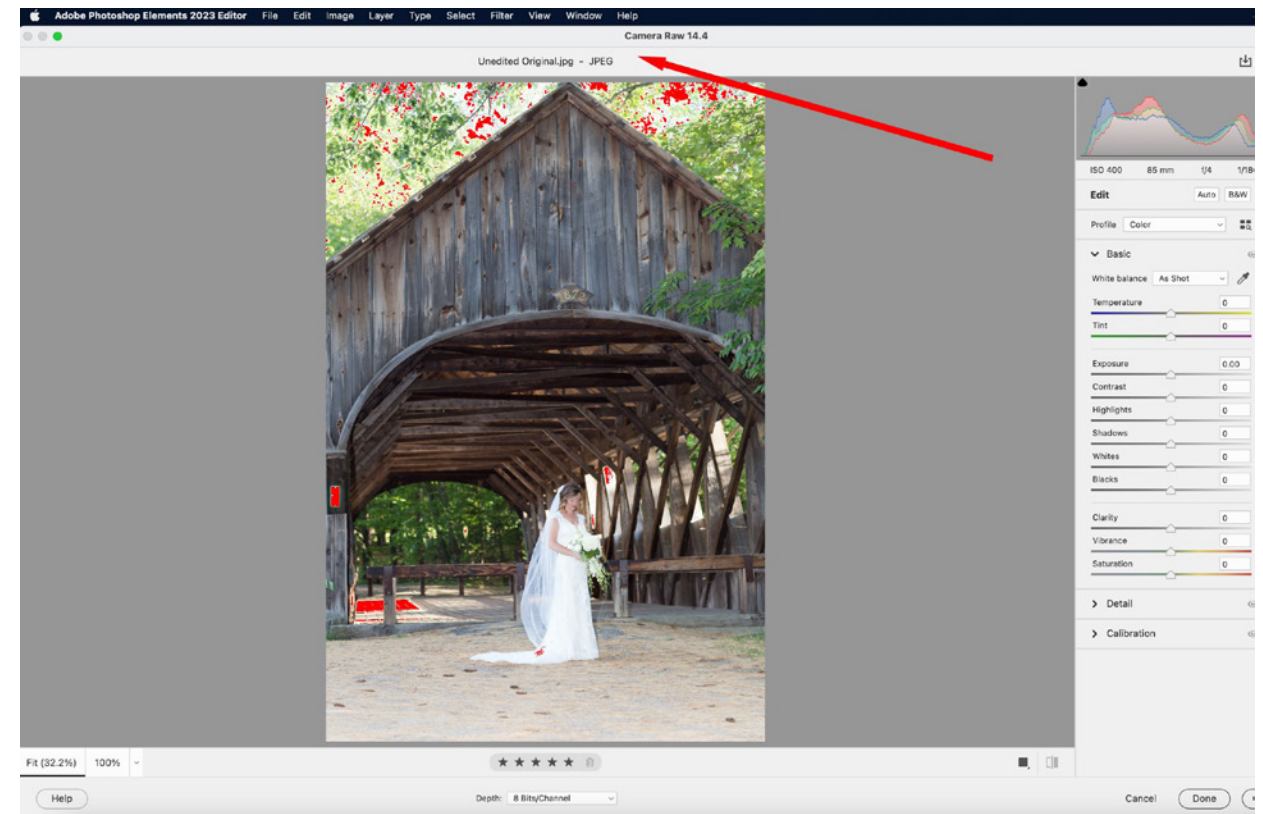
Now take a look at Reference 009. This is an entirely different image. This image, at full resolution, would be 27 MP. But look at the resolution setting! I forget to reset it back to full resolution. In that case, every shot I open in Photoshop will open at the lower resolution setting until it's reset. **Don't forget to reset it!**

Elements 2023



010 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

While Photoshop allows the user to set a 'Preference' to open a .jpeg file in the Camera Raw Processing Window, with Elements you must tell the program each time that this is what you want to do.



011 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Open the Adobe Photoshop Elements Editor in the 'Expert' mode. In the 'File' sub-menu, select 'Open in Camera Raw.'

You will notice that the Elements Camera Raw Processing Window is very similar to the Photoshop version. At this point, just as in Photoshop, you can check the file format at the top of the workspace window. Remember, with Elements you'll have to tell the program each time when you want to open up a .jpeg file in the Camera Raw Processing Window.

Self-Check Quiz

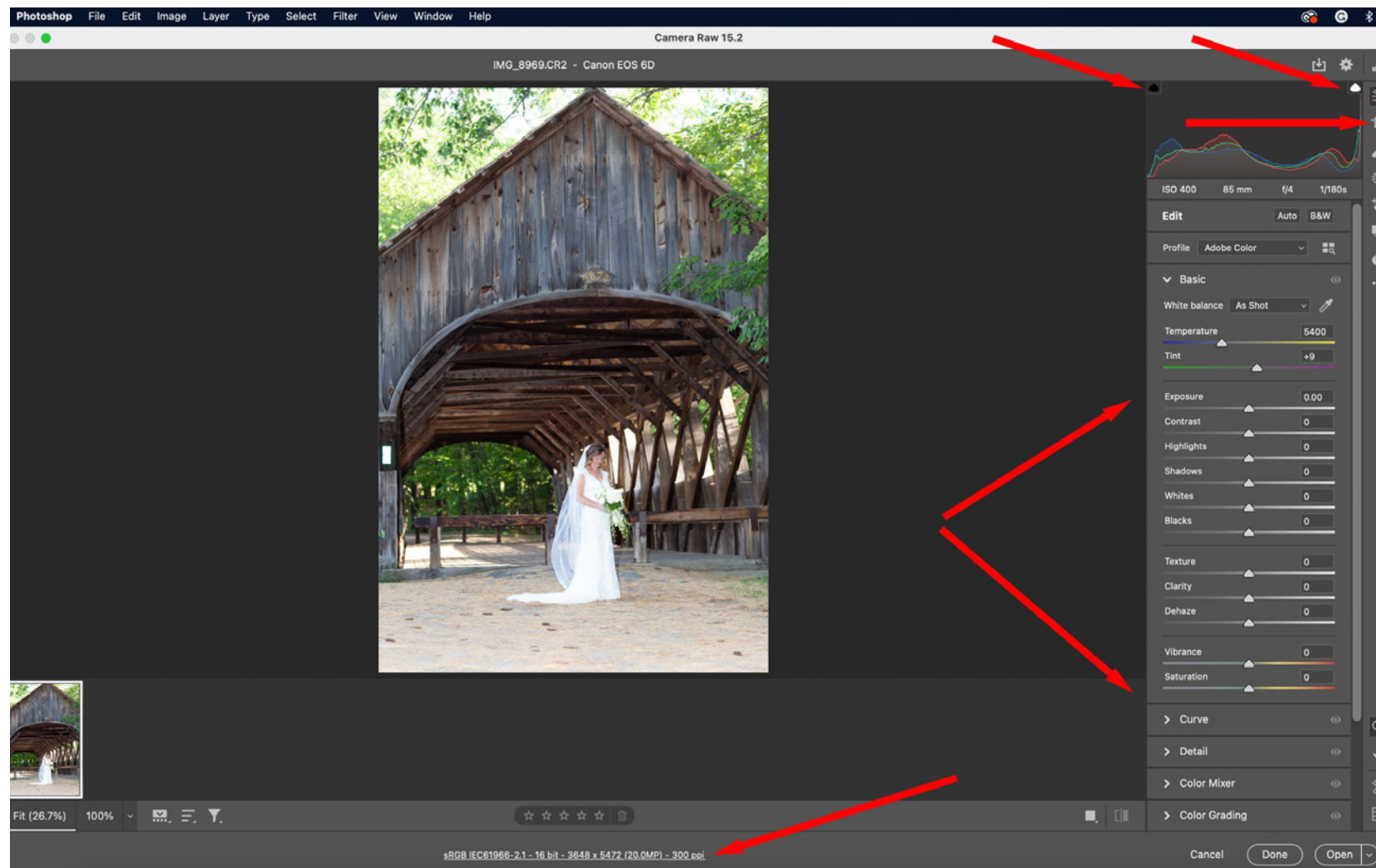
1. True or False: If you edit your photograph using the ProPhoto RGB wide gamut color space, everyone on the Internet will see all the beautiful colors your camera can capture.
2. True or False: You can open a .jpeg file in the Camera Raw Processing Window using Photoshop, but not in Elements.
3. True or False: Workflow is a term that means you shoot a picture before you process it.
4. True or False: To set up Photoshop to automatically open a supported .jpeg in the Camera Raw Processing Window, you should open Preferences and then click Interface.
5. True or False: sRGB is the worst color space because it has the smallest color gamut.
6. True or False: Changing the resolution setting in the Camera Raw Processing Window is ok because it will automatically reset.
7. True or False: It's easier to set up Adobe Elements to always open a .jpeg file in the Camera Raw Processing Window than it is in Lightroom.

03

**THE FUNDAMENTAL EDITING LIST
USING PHOTOSHOP 2023**

No matter which program we use, we must first open the image. That seems like it should be straightforward. However, as we have already witnessed with the reduced resolution setting, it can cause problems.

Step One – Open the Image



012 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Since we have already set up our Photoshop preferences, we can open our file by simply clicking the 'File' dropdown menu, navigating to the correct image file, and then clicking 'Open.'

Our image will automatically open in the Camera Raw Processing Window. As part of our Fundamental Editing List workflow, we want to automatically check the following:

- Is the resolution set to the proper setting (the red arrow at the bottom of Reference 012)? If it is incorrect, click the link to open the 'Workflow Options' dialog box and reset it. If you ever mess around with your color space settings (either in Photoshop or in the camera), then now is an excellent time to check that setting as well.
- Are all the sliders on the Basic tab set to 0? Taking note of this checks whether you have worked on this image before. Believe it or not, it happens. You will sometimes forget that you previously worked on an image and reopen it. If any of those sliders are not zeroed, you've worked on the shot before.

- Click each of the two spade-shaped icons at the top of the Histogram. This turns on the 'Clipping Indicators.' It is indicated that they are on when the spade has a white box around it.
- Finally, the next step in the Fundamental Editing List is always cropping, so click the crop tool.

We are now ready to move on.

Step Two – Cropping the Image

I like to crop the image right at the start of my workflow in the Fundamental Editing List. Why? Cropping a picture can alter information that will affect some of the other edits.

For example, let's say an image contains a bright sky, so bright that it is almost white. In the cropping stage, you determine that a better composition occurs when you remove most of that sky.

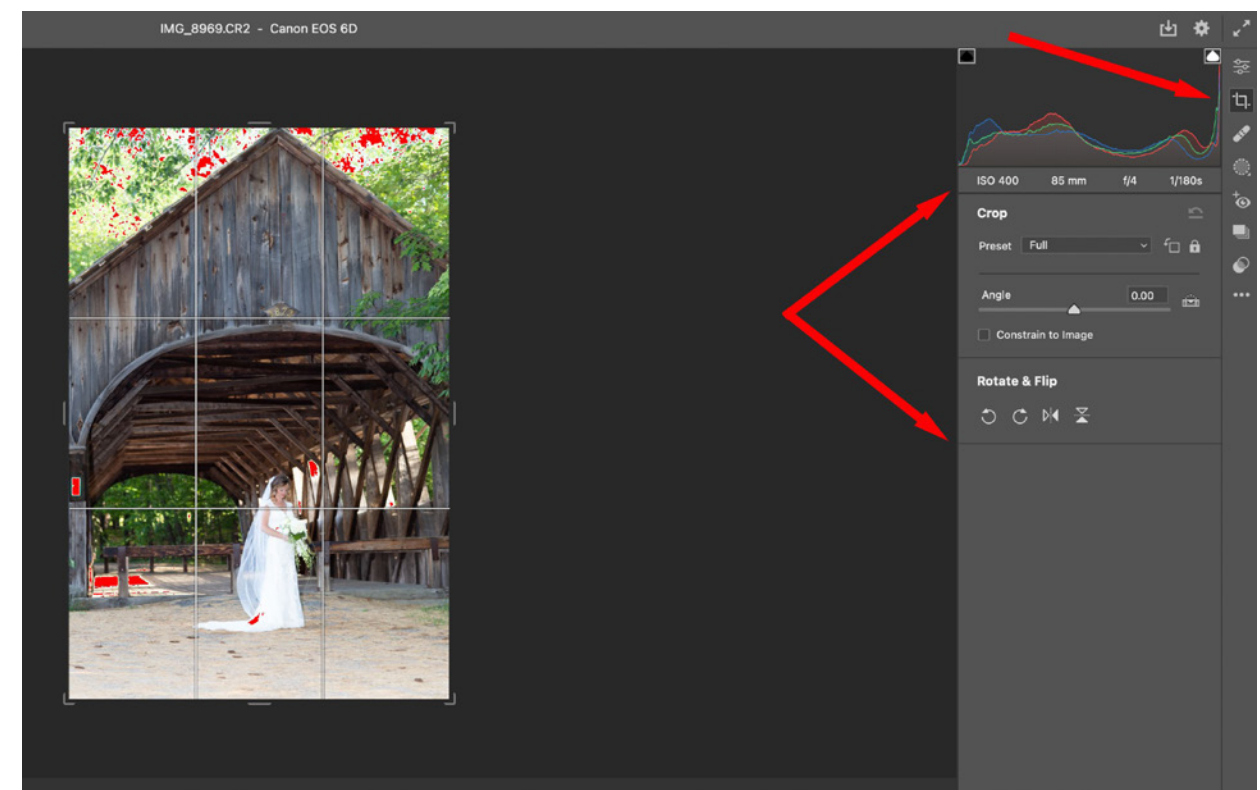
Removing that bright area would affect the Histogram, which will in turn affect your clipping and exposure adjustments.

Earlier in the guide, I mentioned something about composition. Remember, we talked about the three objectives of basic editing. Number three was to fine-tune the composition. **Fine-tuning the composition is the only objective of cropping.**

Would you crop the picture if your image was perfectly composed within the camera? **NO!**

! This is an important lesson! There are no absolutes in photography. Just because you have a Fundamental Editing List doesn't mean you must do every step every time. When it's necessary, do the step. When it's not needed, move on to the next step in the workflow.

That being said... I almost ALWAYS open the crop tool and check my composition. I do this because the Camera Raw Processing Window has a superb overlay option to help you visualize how well your composition works!

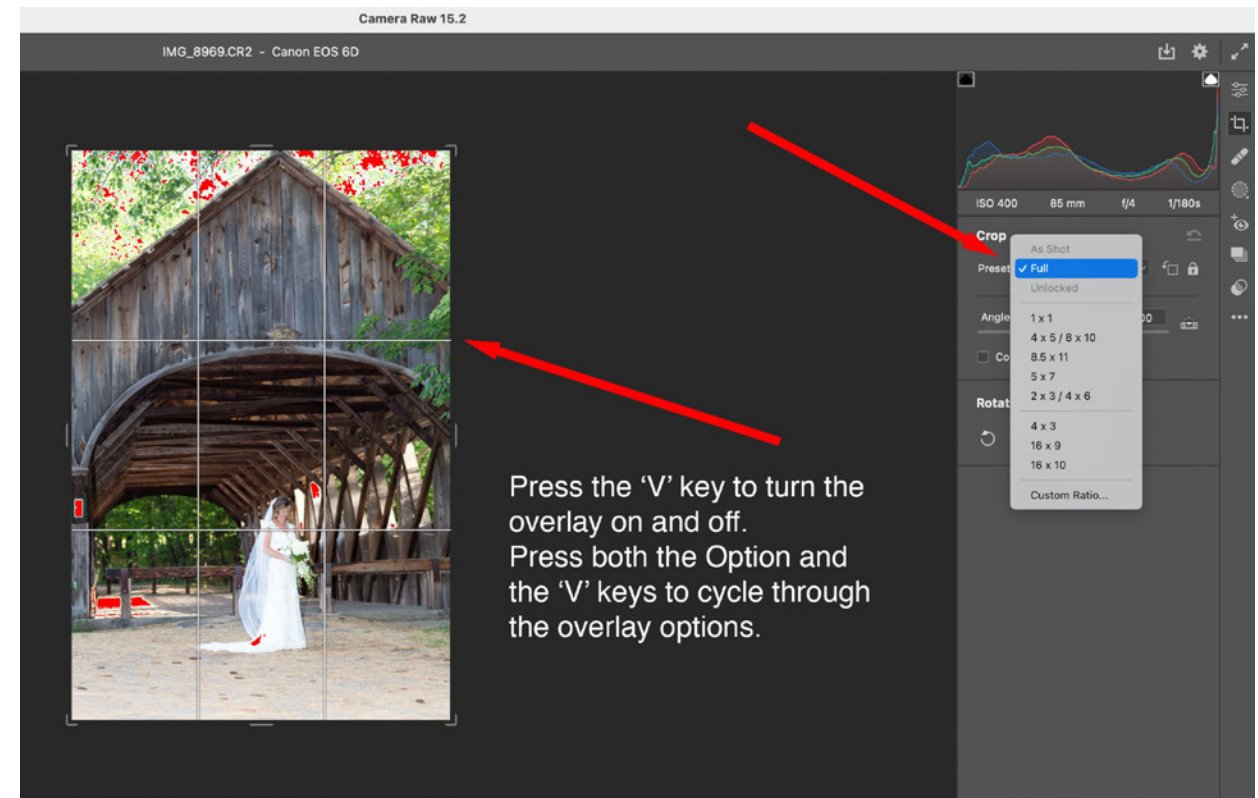


013 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Open the Crop tool to reveal the Crop tool options.

- To the right of the Preset dropdown button, you can rotate the Crop tool from vertical to horizontal and vice versa.
- To release the aspect ratio to a freeform setting that allows you to drag the Crop to any shape you want, click the Lock icon to unlock it.
- The angle slider allows you to crop at an angle.
- The Constrain to Image checkbox limits an angled crop to within the boundaries of the photo.
- Rotate & Flip affects the image and the Crop setting.

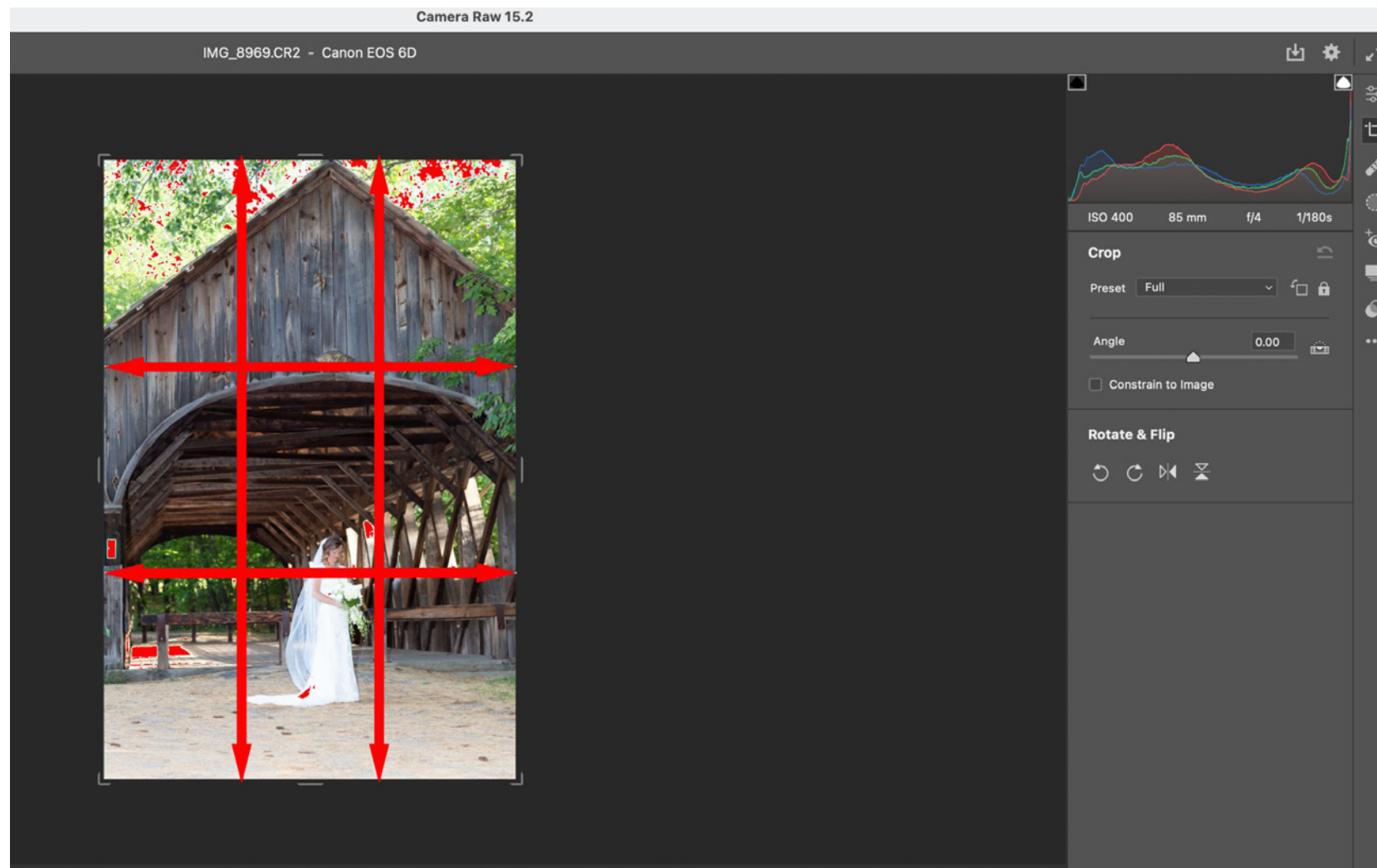
Now select the Preset dropdown menu.



014 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

- Full, when unlocked, means that you can drag the cropping box into any shape you wish. Full, when locked, will constrain the height and width ratio but allow the crop to be changed from vertical to horizontal or vice versa.
- All the ratios listed below will 'constrain' the crop tool to that ratio. For example, a 1x1 ratio will be a square, a 2x3 ratio will be a rectangle that conforms to a 4x6 inch photo print, etc. Using these ratios is essential if you have a specific use for your image. Does it need to fit into a frame? Are you printing it to a particular size? If you are unfamiliar with photo ratios, then check Photzy's free guides for more information.

- To 'Show Overlay,' press the 'v' key. To cycle through the different overlays, press and hold the Option key while continuously pushing the 'v' key.

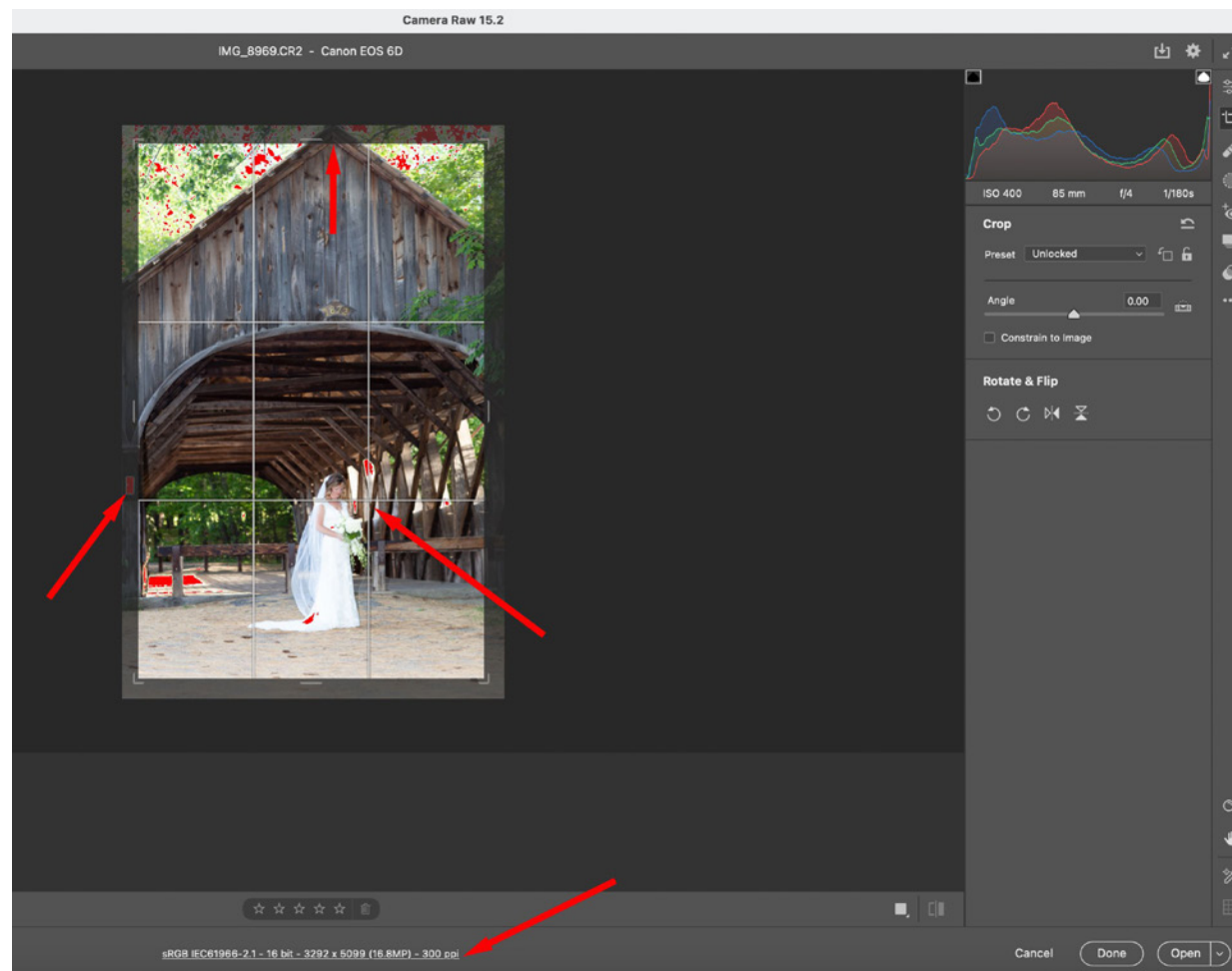


015 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

When you drag the Crop Tool over your image, an overlay showing a 'Rule of Thirds' grid will become visible. If not, press the 'v' key to turn the overlays on. The lines are very light in color and tone, so I put in the red arrows for you to see what it would look like.

I can see several ways that this composition could be improved by cropping.

Why don't you take a moment to decide how you would crop it, and then I'll share my thoughts with you...



016 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

My goal in cropping this image was to make the bride as dominant as possible while not losing the architectural beauty of the bridge. After all, the bridge was the entire reason we were there.

First of all, there was no specific ratio needed, so I could make a freeform crop. I wanted to make the bride a little more prominent within the frame. I took off just enough on the left to get rid of that hot spot that the far-left arrow is pointing toward.

Note: When the 'Clipping' indicators are turned on, highlight clipping will appear as a red mask and shadow clipping will appear as a blue mask.

I took a little off the top without removing the essence of a roof peak.

I removed enough area off the bottom and the right side to get my subject as close to the intersection of the Rule of Thirds as possible. Take note that I didn't put her precisely in the crosshairs. Why? In my opinion, that would have created a frame-break. She would be too far to the right of the frame and looking off-frame.

Note: If you are unfamiliar with the composition term 'frame-break,' check Photzy's free composition guides.

There are two crucial lessons of composition to be learned here:

- Your subject doesn't necessarily have to be right in the crosshairs of the Rule of Thirds for the placement (and use of the rule) to be effective.

- Don't take the rules of composition as Gospel. Use your mind to evaluate whether something makes sense or not! Sometimes rules of composition will contradict each other.

Finally, when you've determined your crop, always check how much resolution the image will have left. See the bottom red arrow. This image, after the crop, will be left with 16.8 MP. That's plenty for any use up to a reasonably large wall portrait print. You just want to ensure that you're not cropping off so much of the image that the end user can't use it in any manner they want to.



Recommended Reading: [Click here if you would like to learn more about composition.](#)

Step Three – Noise Reduction

Most of us are aware of third-party plugins and apps used to reduce noise. Examples are Nik Dfine, Topaz Denoise, and Skylum Noiseless (part of Luminar NEO).

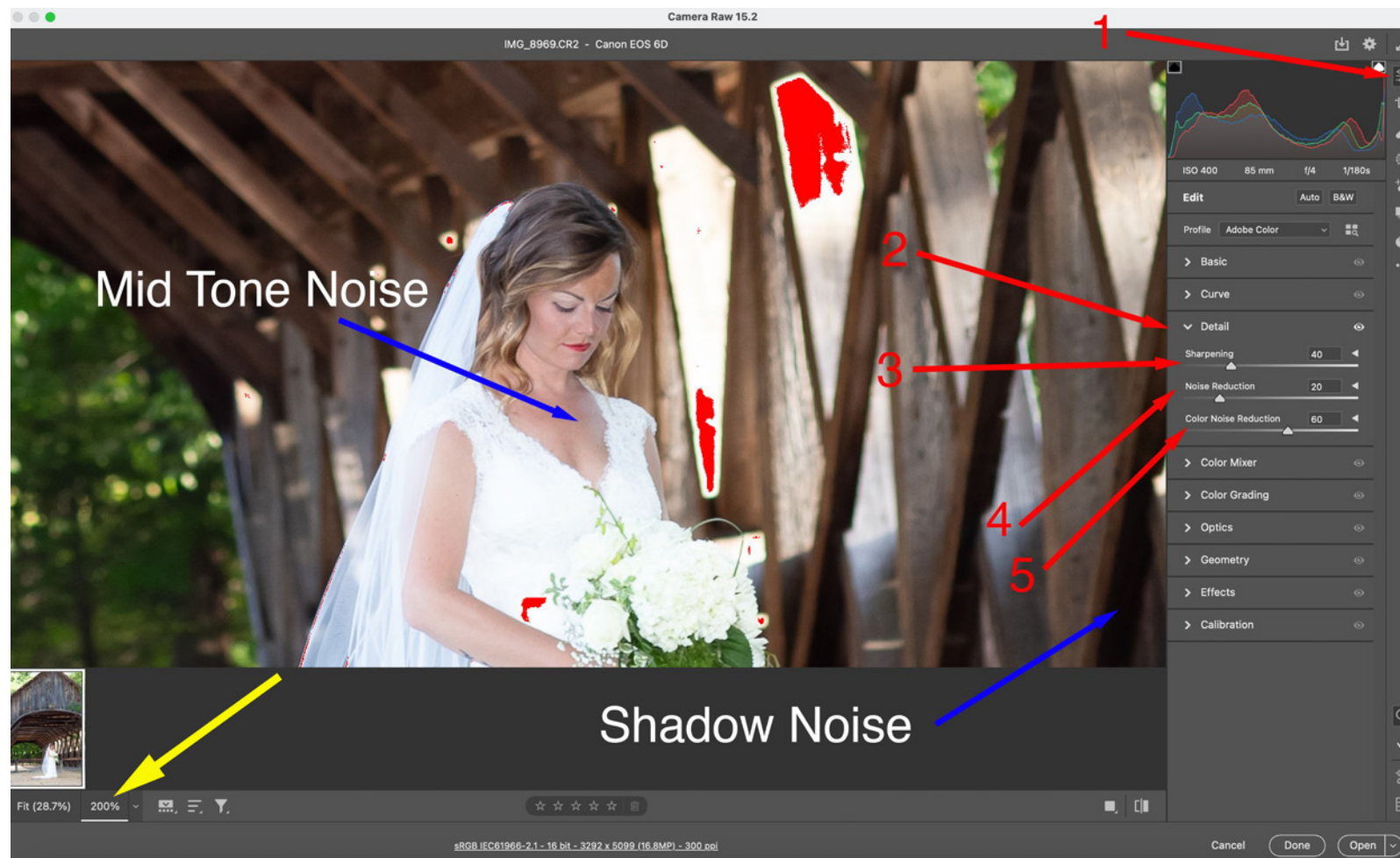
Adobe also has a noise reduction feature built into the Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) window where we do our Fundamental Editing.

These programs work great! I have used them all.

Some photographers aren't aware that a Noise Reduction tool is built into the Camera Raw Processing Window. I have two major points to make about this tool.

1. It works well if the noise is not too severe. I'll give you a guideline on that in a minute.
2. I use it whenever possible because it can be undone later, as with everything else in the Camera Raw Processing Window. The previously mentioned plugins and apps cannot be undone once the image file has been saved. Now consider this. Sometimes, I'll apply noise reduction while making the Fundamental Editing List in the Camera Raw Processing Window. Then later, once the image is within Photoshop, if more noise becomes apparent due to continued editing, I will typically use a plugin or app to deal with the additional noise.

For the record, I work on an Apple iMac Computer. My favorite third-party noise reduction software is Topaz DeNoise.



017 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Here are the steps for using the Noise Reduction tool.

Set your image view at 200% (see the box in the lower-left corner). This setting will make it easier to see the noise.

Scroll around your preview window and locate a position where you have highlights, mid-tones, and shadows.

Noise will most likely be evident in the shadows and mid-tones. If you look at the two blue arrows in Reference 017, (one is pointing at the subject's skin, and the other is pointing at a shadow area of the bridge), it is in these locations that I see noise.

1. Click the 'Edit' button in the far upper-right corner of the workspace.
2. Select the 'Detail' tab.
3. Set the 'Sharpening' slider to a mid-range setting. I chose 40. This will help us to see the noise. **But** when we conclude the noise reduction step, we will return the 'Sharpening' slider to '0' and adjust it at the end of the Fundamental Editing list. **Sharpening should always be at the end of your fundamental editing.**

4. Gradually raise the Noise Reduction slider while watching the areas you identified with noise.

⚠ Important Point – If you have to raise the slider above 50 to make the noise disappear, then the noise is too severe for this tool. In that case, skip the noise reduction step and do it within Photoshop using your plugin or app. For this photograph, a setting of 20 eliminated the tonal noise.

5. You will use the 'Color Noise Reduction' slider far less often than in the previous step. In this photo, I could see some color noise in the shadowed areas of the wood bridge, so I set this slider to 60.


There are two types of noise: Luminance Noise (created in the tone values) and Chromatic Noise (created in the color channels).

If you don't know the difference between Luminance Noise and Chromatic Noise, [click here](#)

⚠ Very Important: Once you're happy with your noise reduction, return the 'Sharpening' slider to zero. We will address sharpening later in the Fundamental Editing List.

Steps Four, Five, & Six – Global Exposure Adjustment, Clipping, and Setting the Black Point and White Point

Exposure adjustment is a very critical step in the Fundamental Editing List. The exposure will determine how your image will appear to others on the Internet. Even more importantly, it will play a significant role in how your photograph would 'print,' either in a photographic print, a digital print, a digital book, or even on a billboard.

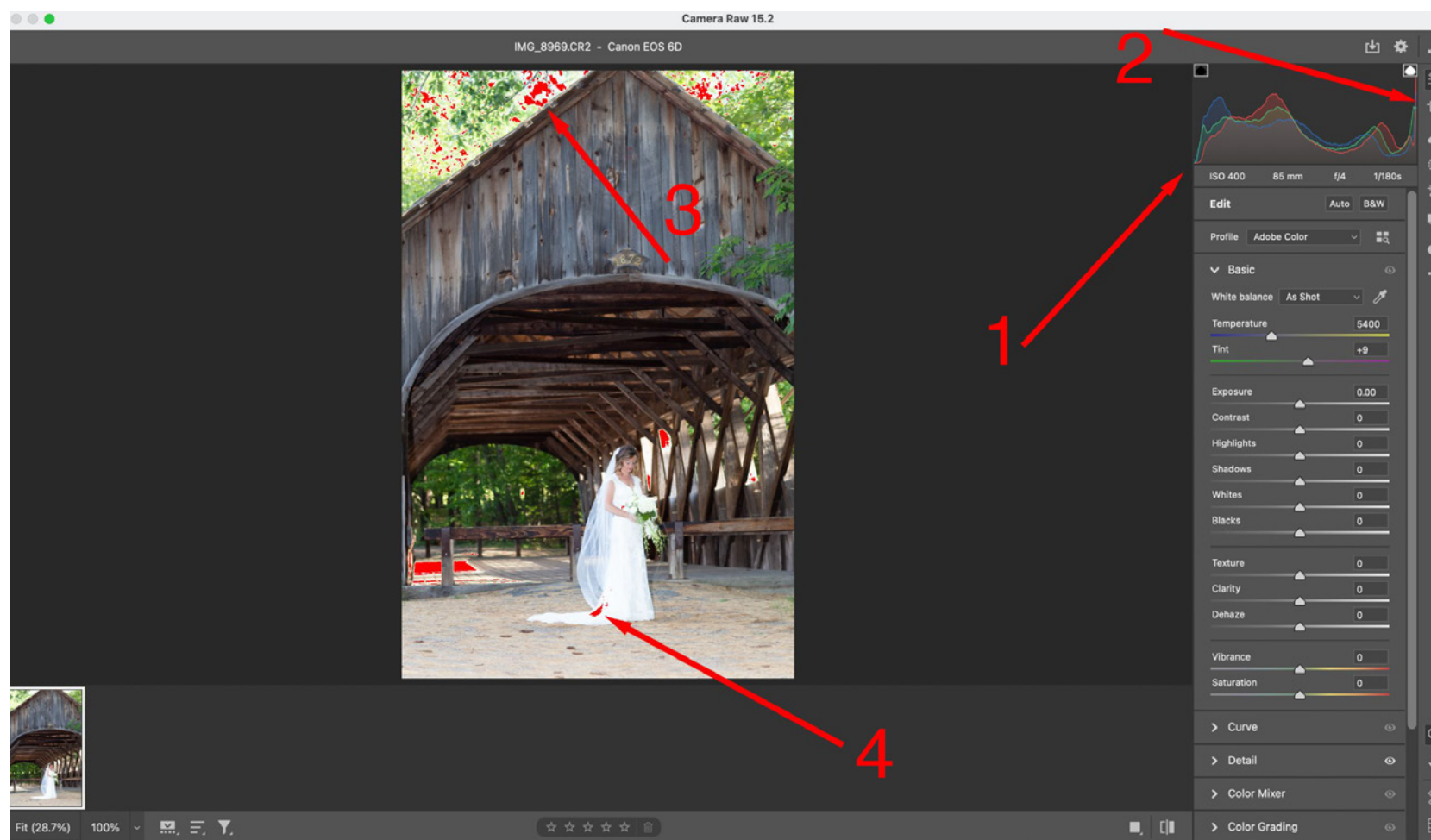
 **Key Lesson:** Unless you are doing monitor calibration, you shouldn't rely too heavily on what you see on your screen when completing your exposure adjustments. One of the most essential tools available to you in your editing software is the **Histogram**. The Histogram is not biased; it simply shows what is fact – that 'fact' being what is the brightness level of every pixel in your image and how they are distributed. That being said, a Histogram does not have a sense of creativity. You must develop your own **'feel'** for what the Histogram tells you versus what you see on your screen. ([Read this if you're not sure what a Histogram is.](#)) Here are some general guidelines when starting with the Histogram. I will give you some percentage ratios as to how much weight I would give to the Histogram versus what you see on your screen.

No monitor calibration and little experience – Histogram 85 Screen 15

- No monitor calibration and medium-level experience – Histogram 65 Screen 35
- Calibrated monitor but minimal experience – Histogram 65 Screen 35
- Calibrated monitor and medium-level experience – Histogram 50 Screen 50
- Special effects: low key, high key, high contrast, etc. – Histogram 25 Screen 75

Please do not take these numbers as the final word. They are simply guidelines to get you started. My mission here is to get you thinking about the Histogram and about how it provides you with high-priority exposure information that you cannot get by simply looking at your screen.

 **Recommended Software:** [This is my favorite monitor calibration tool.](#)



018 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

The first consideration in the **global exposure adjustment** step is evaluating our image and histogram.

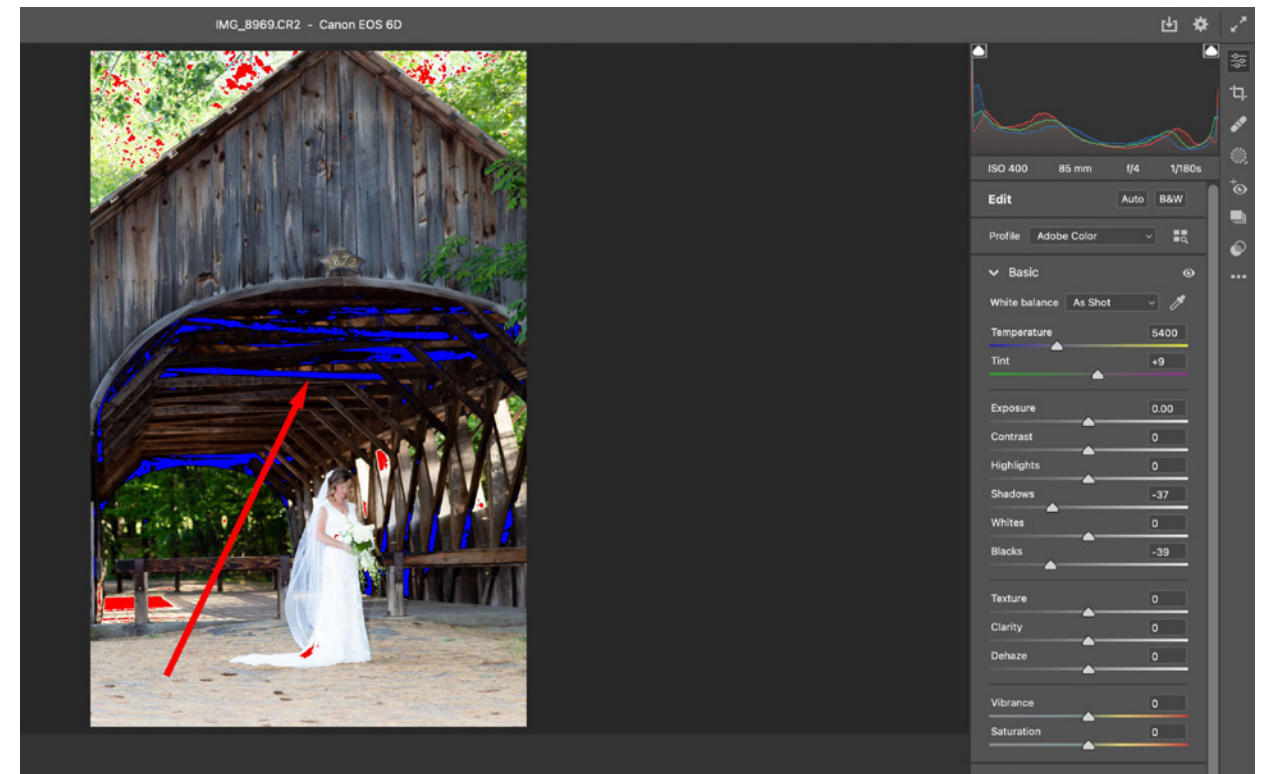
Note: When you see the word 'global,' this means that the edit will affect the entire image.

- The image – Is there a special effect happening in this photograph that might bias the way the Histogram looks? This would include low-key images, high-key images, high-contrast images, low-contrast images, night images, etc. Suppose the final image will not have a full range of tones for aesthetic reasons. In that case, you must consider that when going to the next step of evaluating the Histogram.
- The Histogram – In this bridal portrait, we want a full range of tones, brightness, and detail. A full range of tone, brightness, and detail (on the Histogram scale) will look like some type of mountain range that ends at each end of the scale. The Histogram (for this image) tells

us that the shadow areas are falling within the range of the Histogram scale (arrow 1). The highlights, however, are being 'clipped off' (arrow 2). Notice how the highlight end of the scale abruptly ends. It looks like someone cut it off with scissors. It doesn't 'end' at the end of the scale (at the bottom) like the shadow side does. This indicates that the highlights have been 'clipped.' What does clipping mean? It means that detail is lost in the image. In this case, some areas of light tone that should have detail will appear and print as pure white. This is generally not good. Earlier, we turned our clipping indicators on. Arrow 3 shows how the clipping indicator gives you a red mask, showing you where the highlight clipping occurs.

! A very important point: While the Histogram can change drastically based on the lighting and effects in the photograph, clipping on either end is generally always bad (unless you are looking for a special effect). Whenever possible, we want to make exposure adjustments that eliminate extensive clipping. A little bit of clipping in a photograph's non-important areas is acceptable and even desirable. In Reference 018, the highlight clipping in the sky beyond the trees is fine as it's unimportant to the resulting final photograph. However, the highlight clipping in the bride's dress (arrow 4) would be utterly unacceptable as this is a very crucial part of the image.

Sometimes, you may be unable to eliminate extensive clipping if your camera exposure was way off.

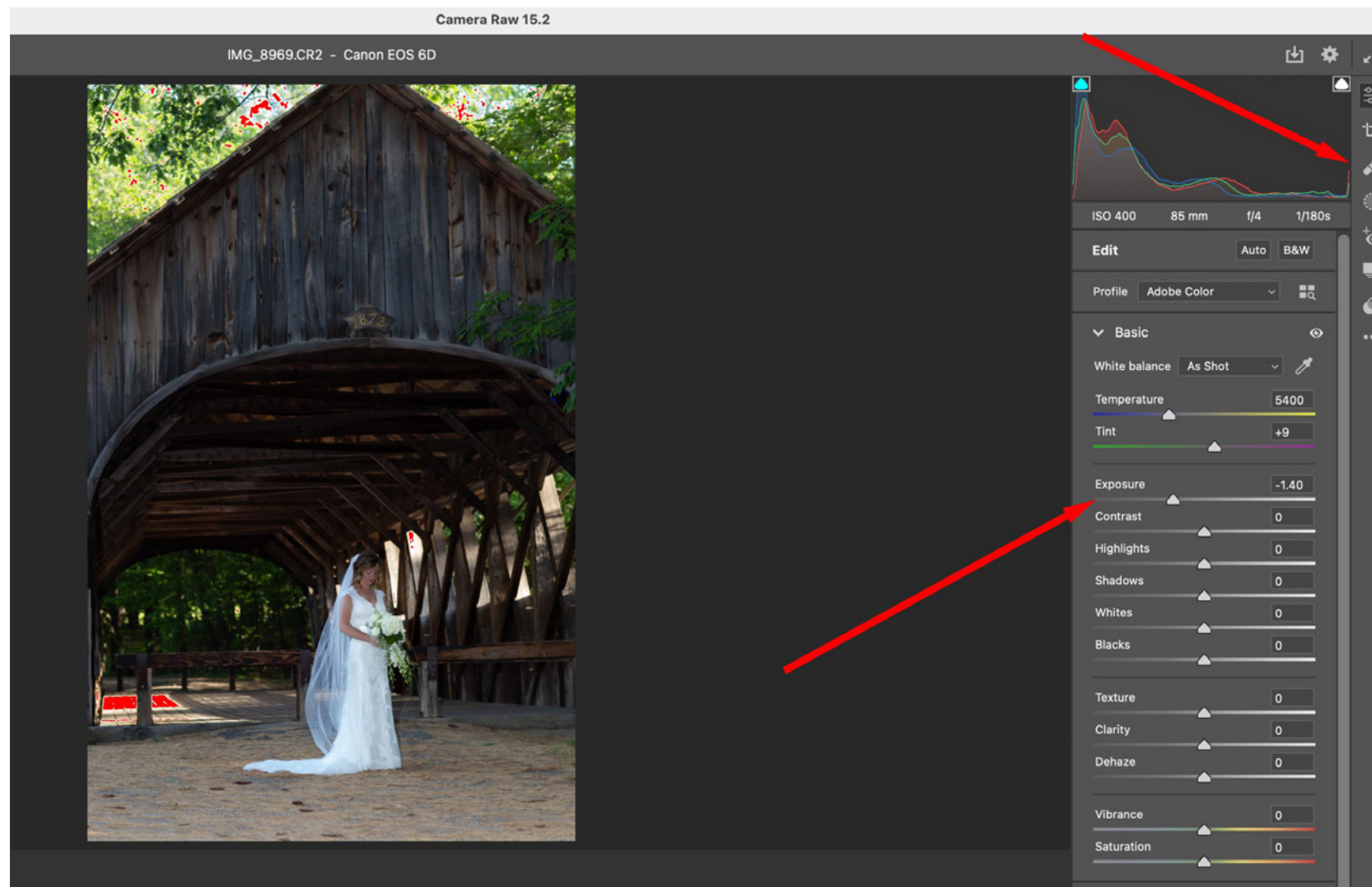


019 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

For visual reference, I lowered the shadow values (019) so that you could see what the shadow clipping indicator looks like.

Shadow clipping is indicated by a blue mask.

After doing our evaluation, these are the concerns...



020 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Photographers who are new to editing will often try to remove clipping by adjusting the exposure slider. If the clipping is minor, sometimes that will work. The downside is that the exposure slider is a global adjustment affecting the entire image. In Reference 020, I attempted to contain the clipping by reducing the Exposure slider.

What happened? The entire image went dark. (This is one of those situations where you trust your eyes and the Histogram.)

Even with the drastic reduction in exposure, the highlight clipping was not wholly eliminated.

Fortunately, one of the superpowers of the Camera Raw Processing Window is that it allows us to make global changes to smaller swathes of the image. It does this by dividing up the exposure adjustment between Highlights, Shadows, Whites, and Blacks.

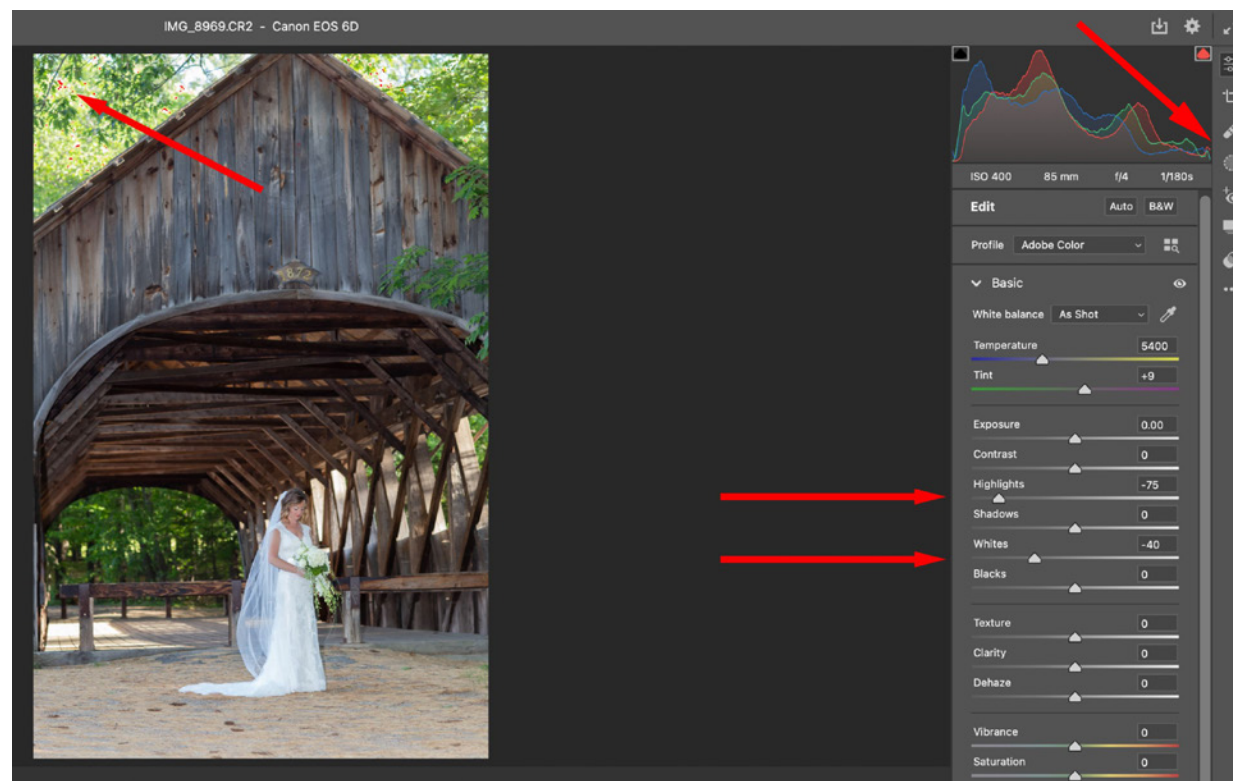
The order in which they placed them in the toolbox is kind of weird. Put this in your mind...

- The Highlights slider affects the very brightest tones.
- The Shadows slider affects a broad range of dark tones.
- The Whites slider affects a broad range of light tones.
- The Blacks slider affects the very deepest dark black tones.

💡 **Pro Tip:** You can quickly and easily reset the sliders by double-clicking on the triangle.

Take a moment and move each slider (Highlights, Shadows, Whites, and Blacks) to the far left and right. Watch what happens to the histogram and the image with each adjustment.

When you're done, reset them all to zero.



021 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 021, you can see that the clipping in the preview window and the histogram are gone (upper-right arrow). This was accomplished by reducing the Highlights and Whites sliders.

The overall Exposure slider was not adjusted at all. Doing the adjustment this way has kept a full range of tone, brightness, and detail throughout the photograph.

Notice that the upper-left arrow points out a few tiny spots of highlight clipping indicator.

Leaving just a few tiny spots of clipping indicator on both ends is a good idea.

Doing so lets you know that your image will display a full range of tones from the deepest black to the brightest pure white, while still portraying full detail in all the tones.

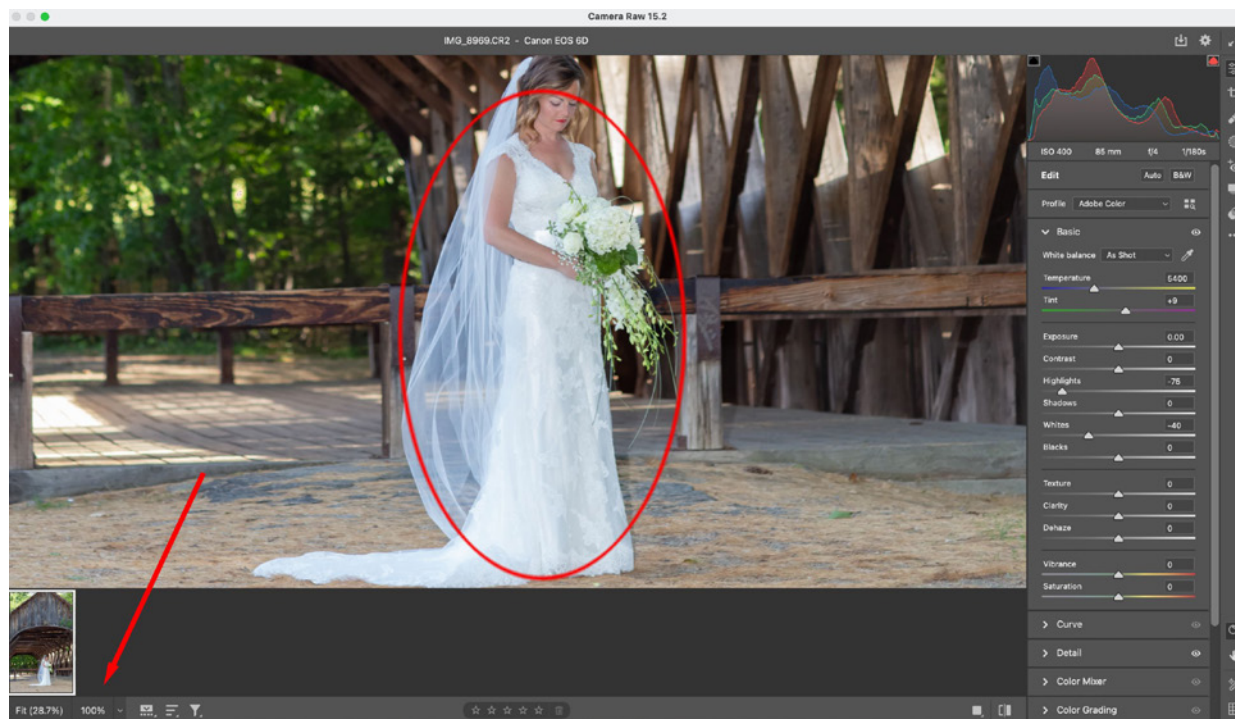
By leaving just a little bit of the highlight clipping indicator, we have set the White Point.

What is the White Point? It is the brightest, purest white in the photograph. Unless you're doing a special effect, the White Point should typically be a small, nondescript area within the image. In this example, it's a little bit of the sky.

Why don't we want the bride's dress and veil to be the White Point? After all, they're white!

The White Point sets pure white. If we place the White Point there, her dress and veil would lose all detail.

We want the dress and veil to be slightly less than pure white.



022 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Suppose an important part of your photograph is in the highlight or shadow end of the Histogram scale. In that case, you always want to zoom in (100%) and check those areas carefully. In this case, the bride's dress, veil, and flowers all fall into the highlight end of the scale. We want to visually check and ensure we see detail and don't miss any clipping indicators in these critical areas.

You probably noticed that the dress, veil, and flowers shifted in color toward the blue spectrum when we reduced the Highlights and Whites sliders. Don't worry. We will address that in a later step.

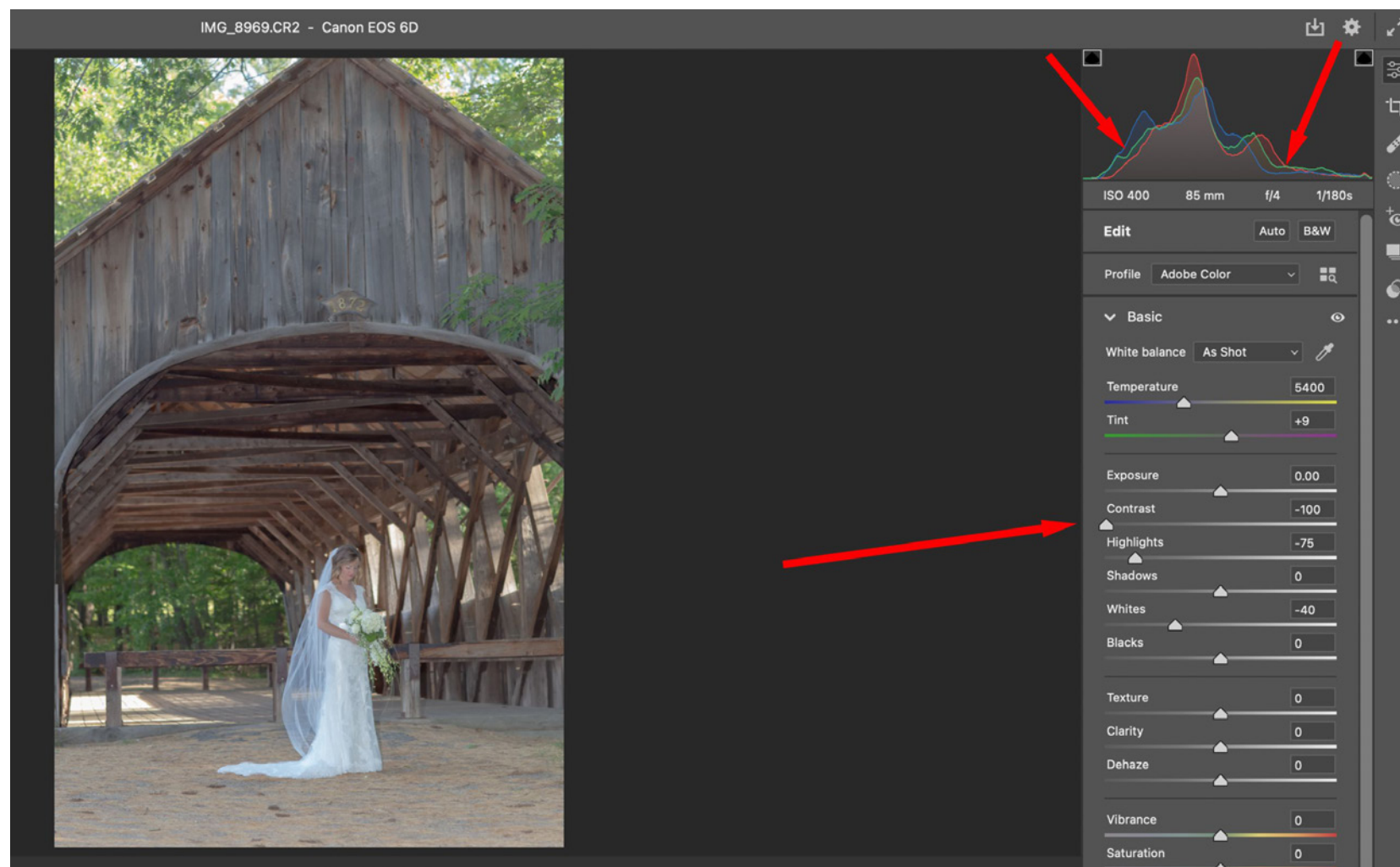
The last consideration in the global exposure adjustment step is contrast.

Judging contrast takes experience. It's a judgment call between what the Histogram tells you and what you see on your screen. Also, we all have personal tastes regarding contrast and color. That's what makes us individuals.

However, you must provide professional results if you consider doing photography work professionally.

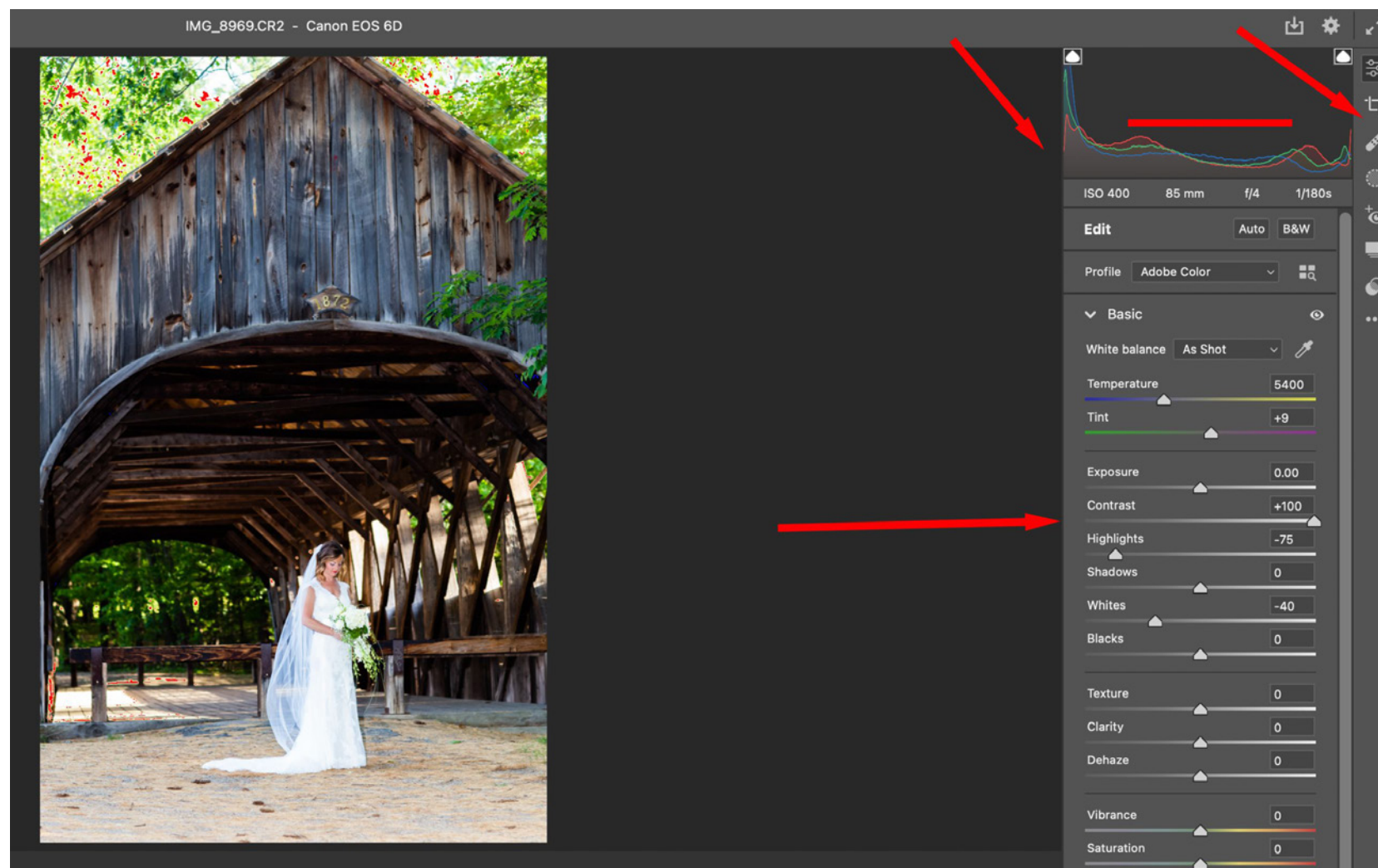
From experience, I know this image needs a slight boost in contrast.

I will drastically change the image's contrast so that you can see how the Histogram changes. First, I'll reduce it to very low contrast. Then, I'll increase it to a very high contrast. Then, I'll adjust it to where it should be.



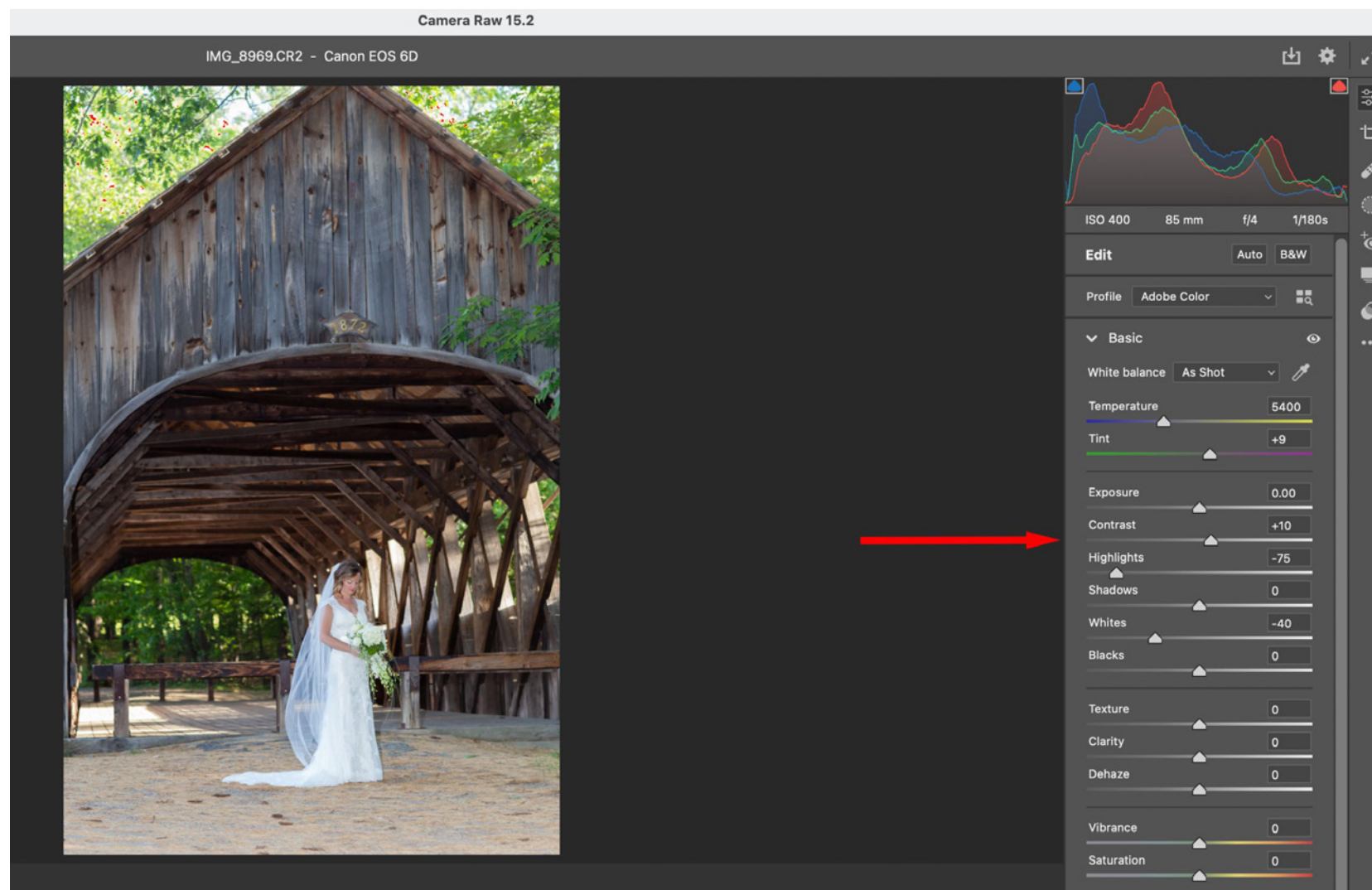
023 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 023, I have reduced the contrast. Look at the Histogram. Do you see how the 'mountain range' (scale) has been shortened? It's short at both ends, with several peaks grouped together. This indicates low contrast. Now, that group of peaks could be positioned to the left. It could also be placed all the way to the right or anywhere in the middle. Low contrast is indicated by a tightly grouped set of peaks, and the rest of the scale is low.



024 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 024, I have moved the contrast slider all the way to the high end. Look at the Histogram now. The peaks have been pushed to either end with a valley between them. When your Histogram has two or three high peaks at each end with a long valley between them, this indicates high contrast.



025 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 025, I have adjusted the contrast to +10. I determined this from experience, studying the Histogram, and visually looking at the photograph.

💡 **Pro Tip:** Using your sample image, watch the histogram as you move the contrast slider from 0 up to +10. Move it back and forth repeatedly. You can see the change in the Histogram. But it is hard to see in the preview window. This is where experience comes in. Don't worry about it too much. Practice and keep your eyes on it.

There is one last primary consideration to setting the global exposure before we move on. It's called 'Setting the Black Point.' The terms refer to what areas of the photograph will become absolute black (the opposite of what was mentioned earlier - absolute white).

Now... I'm sure you're thinking, "Hey! You told us that it wasn't good to have areas like that!"

You don't want **large or essential areas** of your photograph to be at the Black Point or the White Point (unless you're doing a special effect). You only want some small areas to be within that range.

Why do we worry about this?

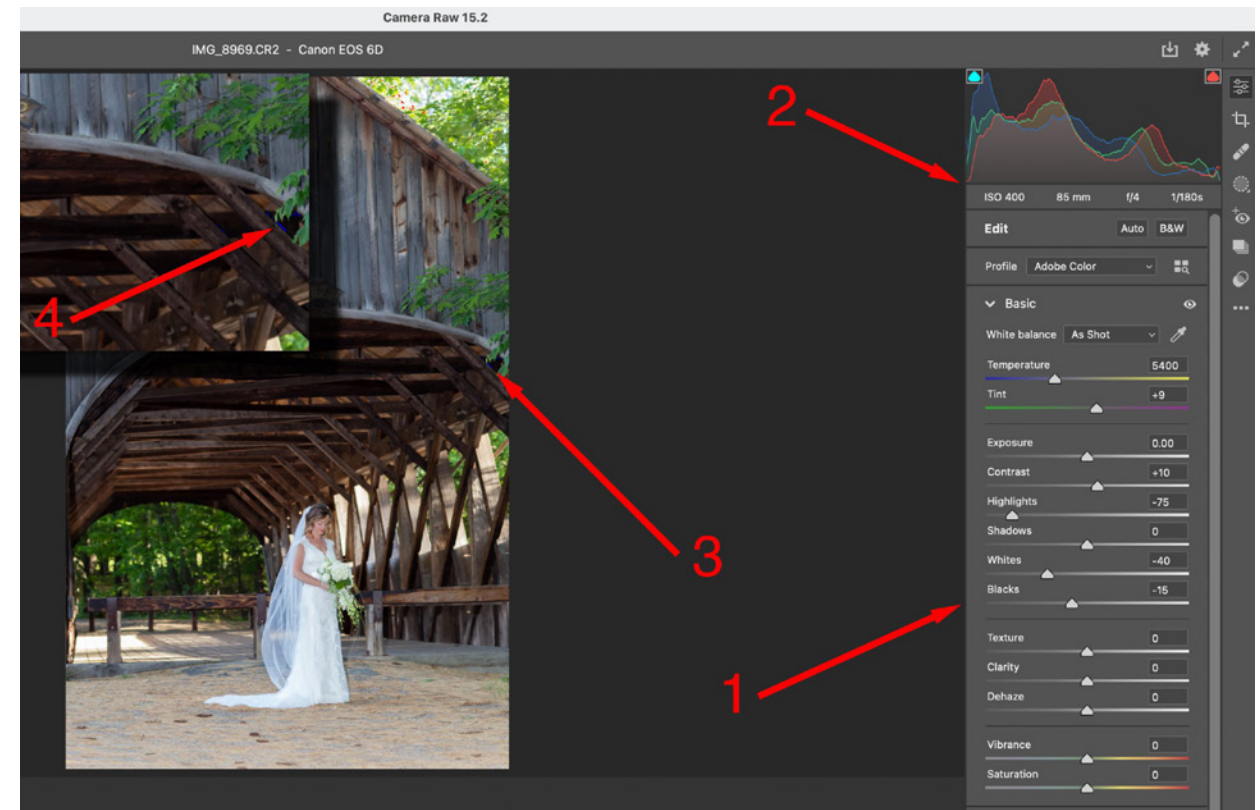
It prevents your image from having muddy contrast, blown-out highlights, and pale or overly dense blacks.

For example, if you photographed a black cat on a black silk cloth background, the vast majority of the tones will be in the deep shadow to the black spectrum. BUT! We only want a tiny section of the image to be absolute black. Otherwise, we will lose the texture of the fur and the sheen of the cloth.

There are many ways to set the Black Point and White Point. Most of them are overly complicated, in my opinion. I like to make use of the Clipping Indicators to accomplish this task.

Remember when we pulled back on the highlights and whites to remove the clipping, but we left just a little bit of the clipping indicator up in the sky? We were, at that point, setting the White Point. We now know that all the light-toned, highlight areas will have texture, but those tiny spots in the sky will be pure white.

Now we need to set the Black Point. Remember, earlier, there was no Black Clipping indicator. We will tweak the blacks until we get a tiny bit of visible Black Clipping Indicator (a blue mask).



026 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

By adjusting the Blacks down to -15 (arrow 1), a tiny little bit of the Shadow Clipping Indicator has appeared in the Histogram (arrow 2) and in the non-important rafters of the bridge (arrow 3). It's so tiny that it might be hard to see, so I created an inset photo on the left (arrow 4). It's there. We have now set our Black Point.

Steps Seven & Eight – Color Temperature & Color Tint

When we take digital photographs, we set the White Balance on the camera. This white balance setting tells the camera what the Kelvin Temperature of the light was at the time the photograph was taken. If we set the camera on 'Auto White Balance,' the camera calculates the best white balance setting.



Recommended Reading: If the previous paragraph sounded a bit like Greek to you, you may wish to check out this Photzy Publication: [Understanding Light: Book One](#). This book covers everything you need to know about light, including white balance and the Kelvin Temperature of light.

You can change the overall color of a file by changing the White Balance setting in the ACR window. The 'Temperature' and 'Tint' sliders are there to correct minor problems that occurred in the rendition of color. In other words, if the White Balance setting on the camera was misjudged or simply could not compensate for the color temperature of the light that was present when the photograph was taken, you can tweak the color with these two sliders.

Hopefully, this will make sense to you. These terms – color balance, color temperature, tint, and white balance – have specific meanings. However, in the broad range of digital photography, they are all talking about the same thing. And that is achieving accurate color or a chosen color bias.

It's important to know that because people tend to use these terms interchangeably. In a Fundamental Editing List, all three of these terms refer to what your image's color will look like.

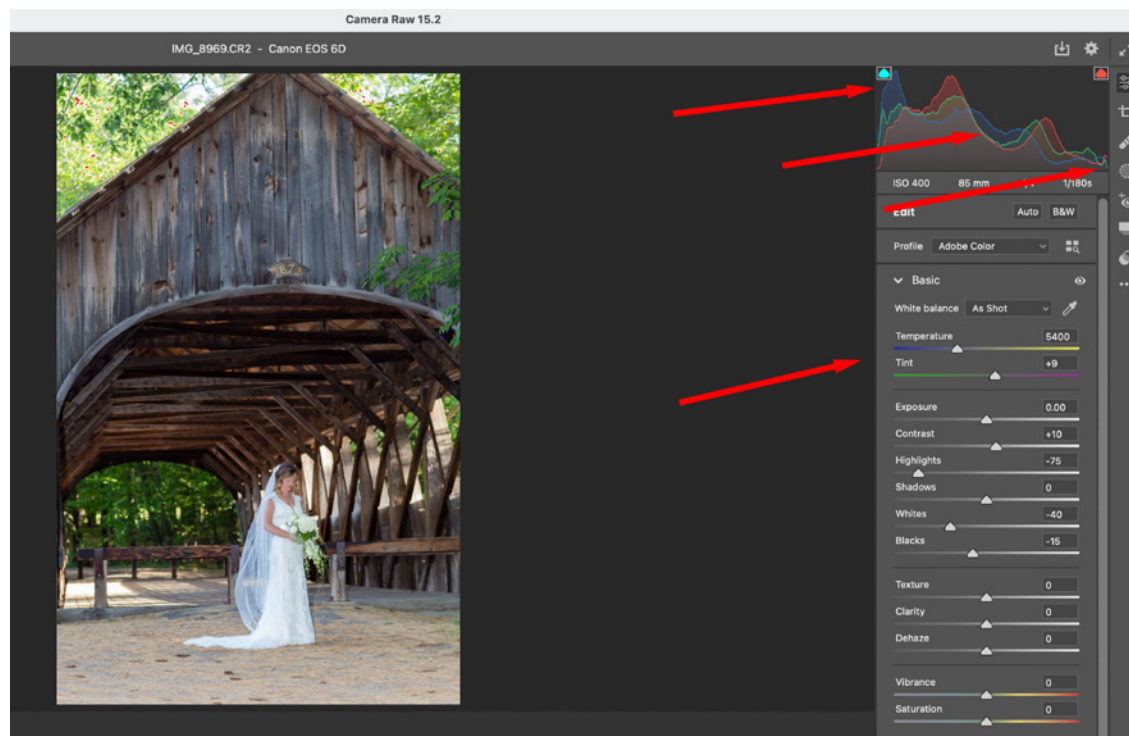
And to make things worse, this is an area of photo editing with its own mystical voodoo mojo. There really is no right or wrong answer... UNLESS... you're taking on professional photography assignments! If you're shooting an advertisement for Coke-a-Cola, you had better be sure that the 'red' in their logo is correct.

The color must be pleasing and reasonably accurate for what we're trying to achieve with our bridal wedding portrait.

Note: When photographing people, you should generally judge your color accuracy by looking at the skin tones.

The pleasing part (color accuracy) is where the voodoo comes in because none of us see colors precisely the same. Once again, this is where the Histogram is your helper.

Like with the exposure step, we must use a combination of the Histogram, our experience, and what we see on our monitor to judge the color.



027 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Reference 027 is a screenshot showing the image, the Histogram, the current White Balance setting, the Temperature slider, and the Tint slider.

Here is the color evaluation process:

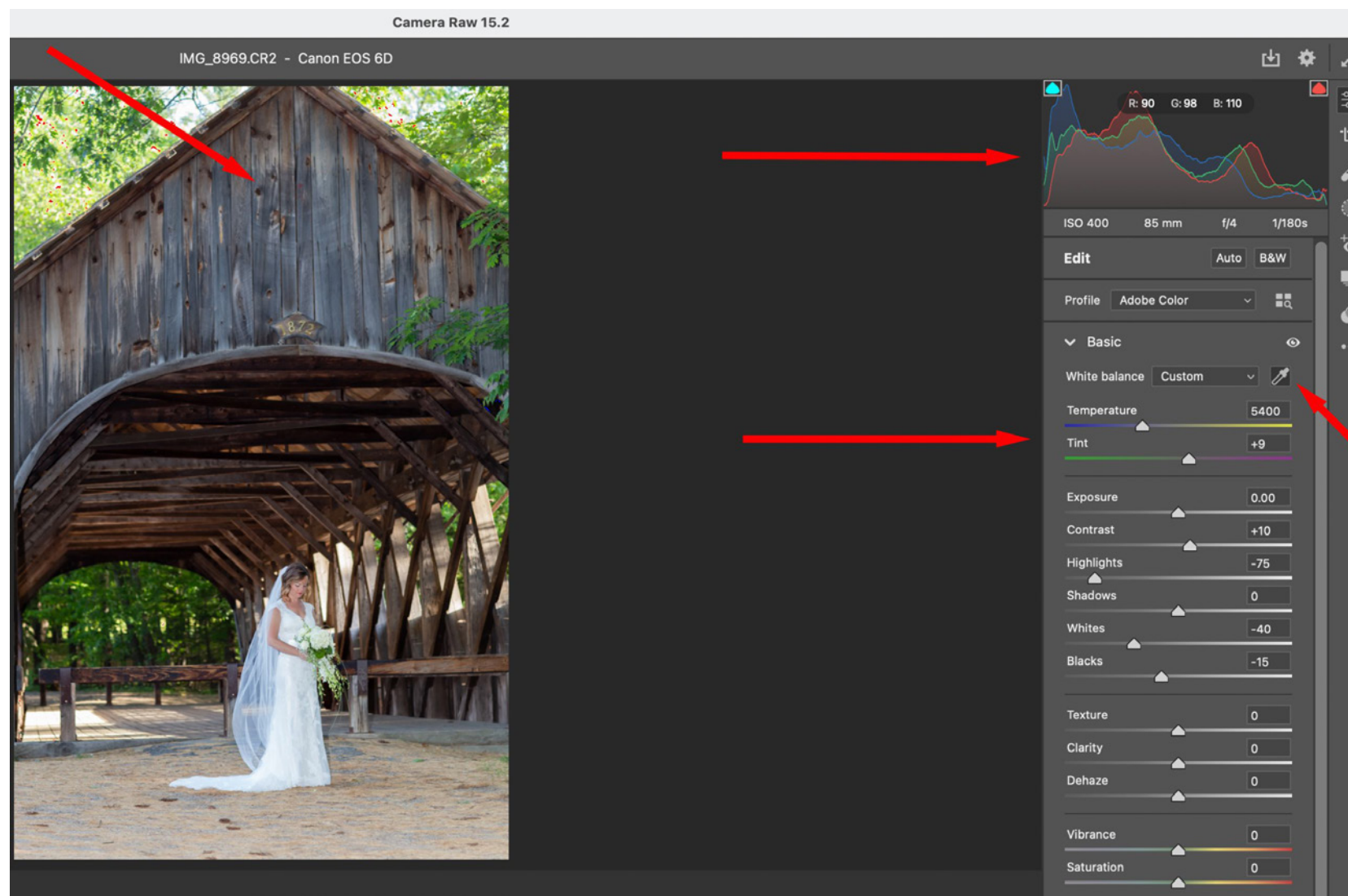
1. A visual check of the image. This will improve with experience. When I look at this bridal portrait, I see a skew in the overall color toward the color blue. My camera's White Balance setting was set to 'Auto.' The camera tried to devise the best alternative between 'the shade light,' the fill flash, and the warm sunshine in the background. The result gave a slight blue/cyan colorcast.

2. When we look at the Histogram, we see high levels of 'blue' in the deepest shadows, the mid-tones, and a little in the highlights.
3. Our White Balance dropdown menu is set: 'As Shot.' I use this setting 99% of the time. The other settings skew the color without considering what the image truly looked like or what we're trying to achieve. I avoid these blanket settings, and so should you. If I move the Temperature or Tint sliders, the White Balance will change to 'Custom.'
4. The Temperature and Tint sliders are calculated and set upon opening by the Camera Raw Processing Window software. It does this by evaluating the information supplied by the camera and considering your chosen Color Space profile.

Suppose there were no requirements for the color of your image other than how you'd like it to look. In that case, you can simply leave the Temperature slider where it's at or slide it around until the image looks best to your eye. You can then tweak the Tint slider. Always do the Temperature first and then look at the Tint. Very rarely will the Tint slider require much movement, if any – unless you're doing a special effect or had funky lighting when you shot your picture.

However, with our bridal portrait, we need some assurance of a standard of color. This image will likely be printed, placed into a photo album, and viewed next to other pictures shot at the same wedding.

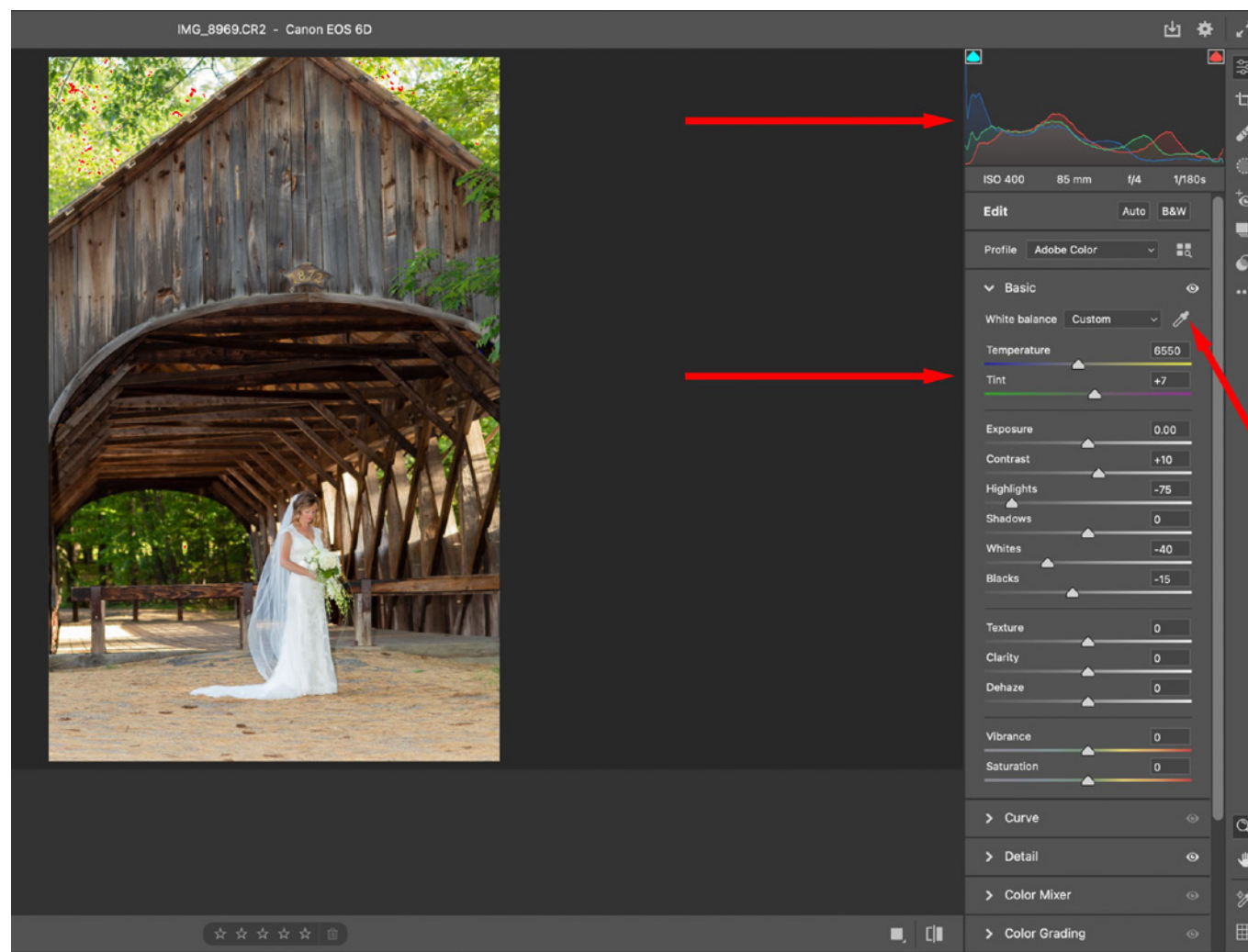
Here is how we accomplish that.



028 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Let's adjust the color Temperature and Tint on this bridal portrait.

In Reference 028, look at the far-right arrow. This is the 'White Balance' tool. It works by left-clicking your mouse on an area of white or 18% gray. I find that an area of gray tends to produce better results. However, if you need to use an area of white, you can tweak the adjustment with the Temperature and Tint sliders. Check out what the Histogram looks like, as well as the Temperature and Tint settings. I will use the White Balance tool to click on the bridge where the red arrow points. To my eye, this spot looks to be about 18% gray.



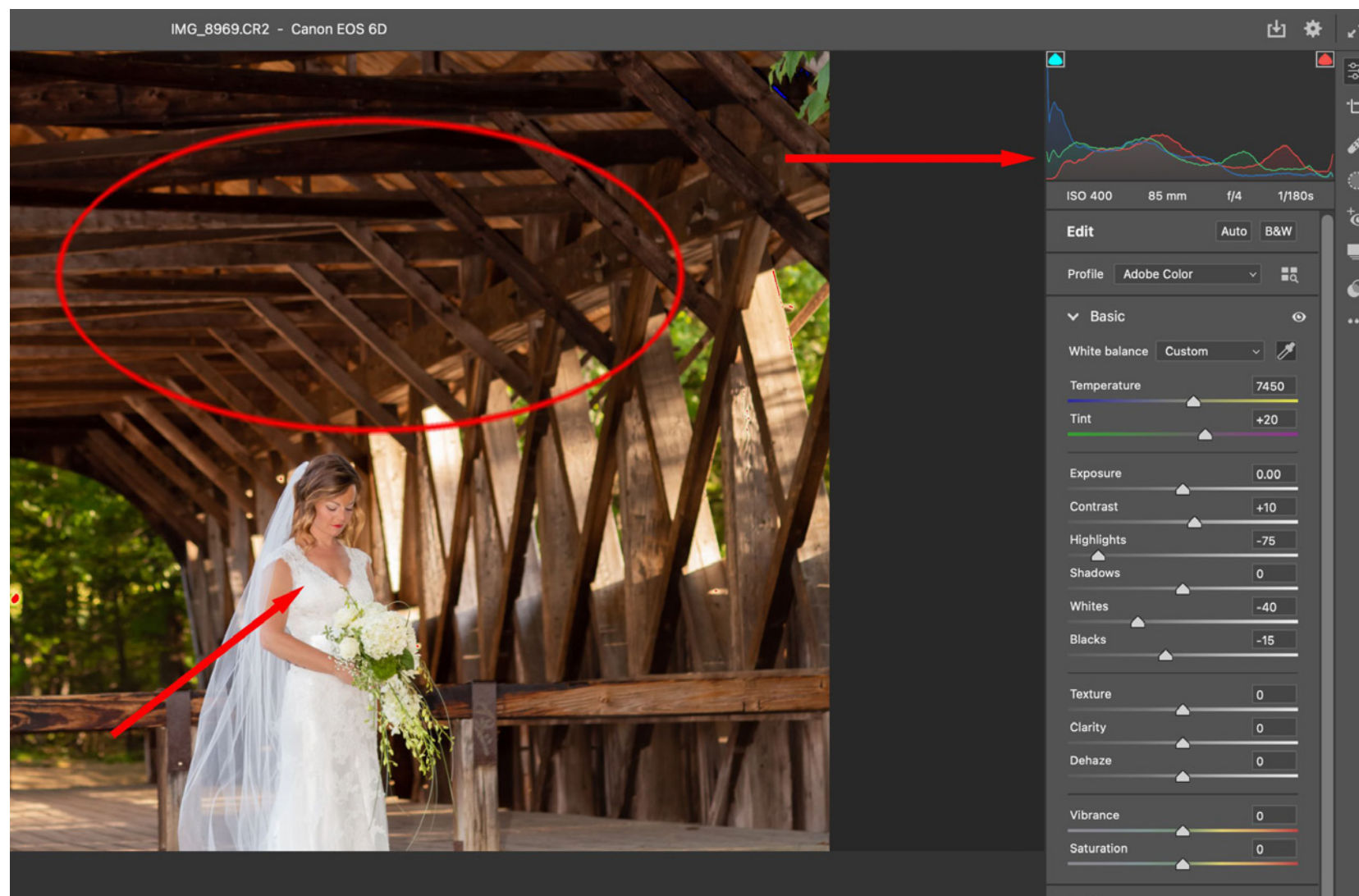
029 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

After clicking on the bridge, notice how the Histogram has changed, as well as the Temperature and Tint settings. We now have a custom White Balance. Compare the Preview screen in 028 with the Preview in 029. The photo is now much warmer in color. The whites and mid-tones have cleaned up nicely. The Histogram still indicates an abundance of blue in the shadows. This is because of the deeply shaded woodland area behind the bridge. I may want to correct that in a later step. But for now, I'm happy with it.

When exacting color is required, professional photographers will often place an 18% gray card within the frame so they can click on that spot and **know** it is 18% gray.

They would then remove the card through cropping, cloning, or before shooting if the light isn't changing. Most of us don't need to take it that far.

In this shot, we are lucky because there were natural areas of white and gray within the scene. If you're working on your own photos, and there isn't any apparent white or 18% gray area, find a spot that is the closest and click on it. You may get some pretty funky color adjustments (which I will show you in a moment). If you don't like the color, simply undo your action. Under these circumstances, it is probably best to adjust the Temperature and Tint by eye. (By the way, this is another reason why using a color monitor calibration tool is helpful.)



030 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 030, I clicked with the White Balance tool on the dress beside the arm (where the arrow points). This edit really warmed up the image. Look at the Histogram. The 'Blue' areas were significantly reduced. However, the 'Red' areas increased. I then switched to my eyes for evaluation and thought, 'This is too red,' so I reset my last action.

Go back and look at Reference 028. The bridge is where I found my 18% gray, which gave me the best overall result with the White Balance tool.

IMG_8969.CR2 - Canon EOS 6D



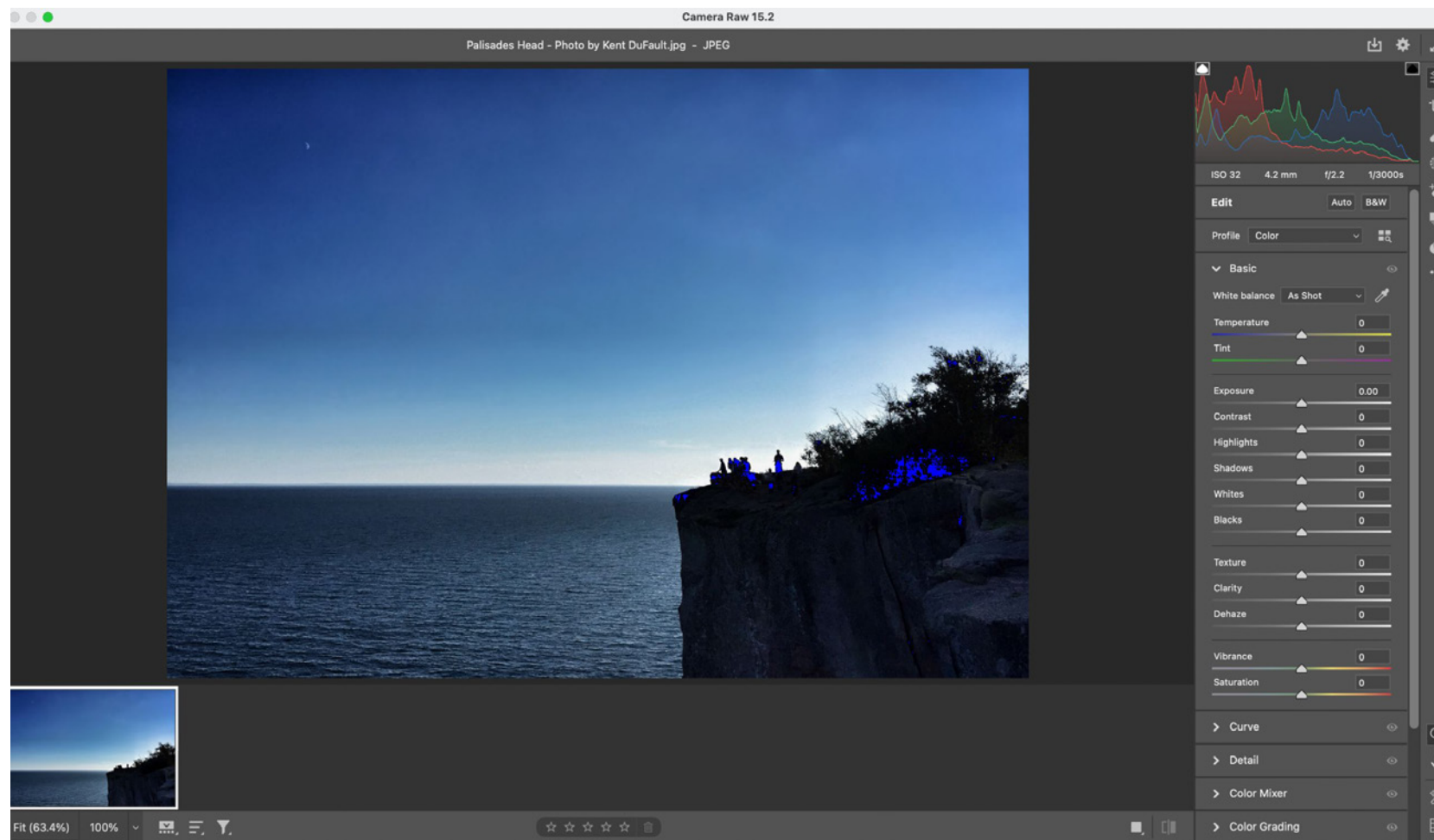
031 - Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 031, you can see the result of clicking on the gray area of the barn. To my eyes, most of the blue has been removed, especially from the areas of white. The image has been warmed up just enough to give an accurate, pleasant rendition of the lighting that occurred that afternoon.

I want you to review References 027 through 031. Look specifically at the Histogram, Preview image, Temperature, and Tint settings.

Did you notice that the Temperature setting in References 029 and 030 was much higher than in 028? The Tint was also higher. The vital aspect of learning here is patience and thought about where will you click the White Balance tool to select your color balance setting.

Also, sometimes the correct color temperature isn't always the best choice! Remember to judge your changes using three criteria: the Histogram, a visual check of the Preview window, and a thought process toward your desired result.



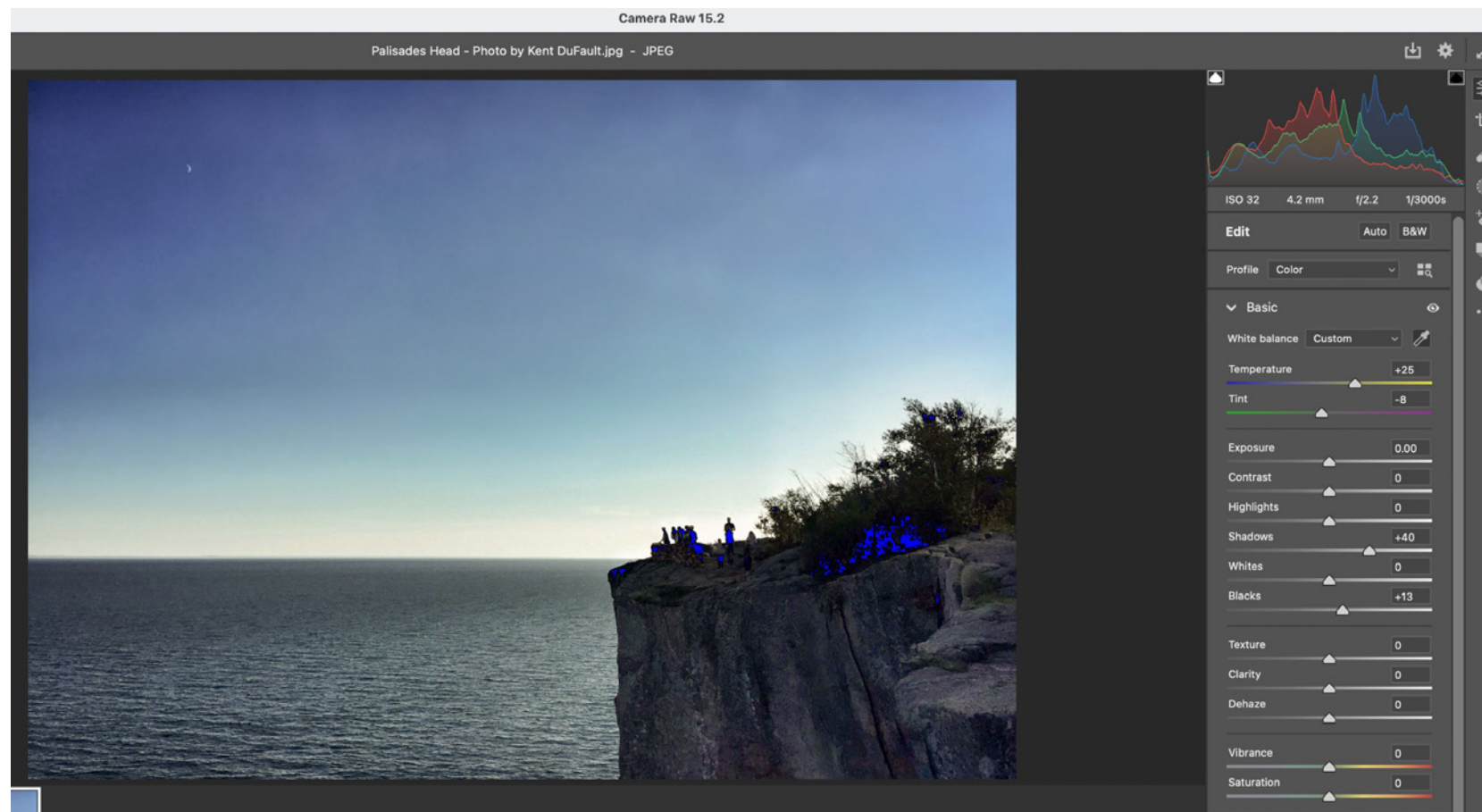
032 – Photograph and Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Many beginner photographers want simple answers. Unfortunately, that's not how it works. It's not like engineering, where if bolt 'A' isn't correctly tightened into thread 'B,' the bridge will fall down.

Photography is an art. Art means you must think through your message. Take Reference 032, for example. The color temperature is way off normal, and there is clipping in the shadows.

The Fundamental Editing List dictates that we should fix this.


But what happens if we do?



033 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

I left-clicked with the Color Balance tool in the white area along the horizon line. What happened? The entire mood of the photograph became washed out in the color and tone. I also tried eliminating all the shadow clipping, but it was impossible.

The resulting image is quite lackluster. Even though the camera misread and skewed the white balance, that was the more pleasing result!

 **Key Lesson:** It is essential to learn how to use the tools of the Fundamental Editing List effectively. However, nothing replaces your mind. **Don't follow formulas.** Use a mixture of knowledge, numbers, and creativity to achieve your best results.

We have covered a lot of ground. Let's take a breather and do a short Self-Check Quiz.

Self-Check Quiz

1. True or False: When opening an image in the Camera Raw Processing Window, the resolution always resets to the native resolution of the opened file.
2. True or False: If I set my Crop Tool to a ratio of 2:3, it will show me how my image will fit into an 8x10-inch photographic print.
3. True or False: In the Camera Raw Processing Window, I can set the Noise Reduction Luminance slider to 100 anytime I want to because I'm working in RAW.
4. True or False: If I have a good eye for color, monitor calibration is absolutely unnecessary.
5. True or False: If there is shadow clipping, I must always eliminate all of it.
6. True or False: Adjusting the Contrast slider doesn't affect the Histogram.
7. True or False: I always set the White Balance in my camera.
8. True or False: I should always click on something white in my picture when using the Color Balance tool.
9. True or False: When adjusting the Temperature slider, I should trust the Histogram and not my eyes.
10. When the Histogram is chopped off at either end, this is known as _____.

Step Nine – Clarity

The Clarity setting is a super helpful tool, which I believe often gets overlooked. Many photographers aren't even sure exactly what it does.

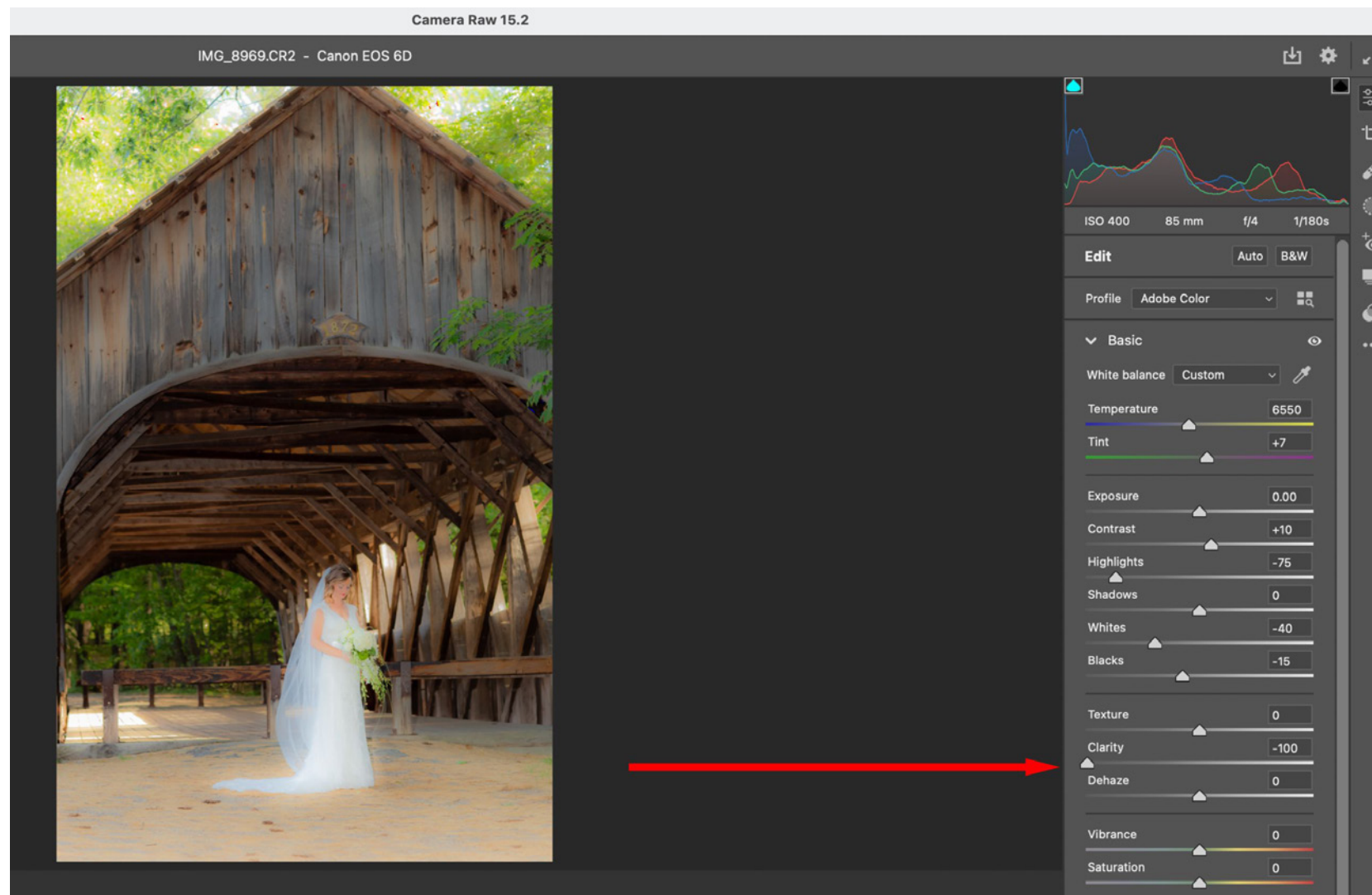
Technically, this is what it does. It adds contrast to the mid-range tones.

Creatively, this is what it does. It creates a visual impact by adding the optical illusion of increased depth and sharpness. Think of high-definition television versus the old standard television.

It also creates a visual benefit; it sharpens up the image without adding a lot of noise, which is why you should adjust it before even thinking about touching the Sharpening tool.

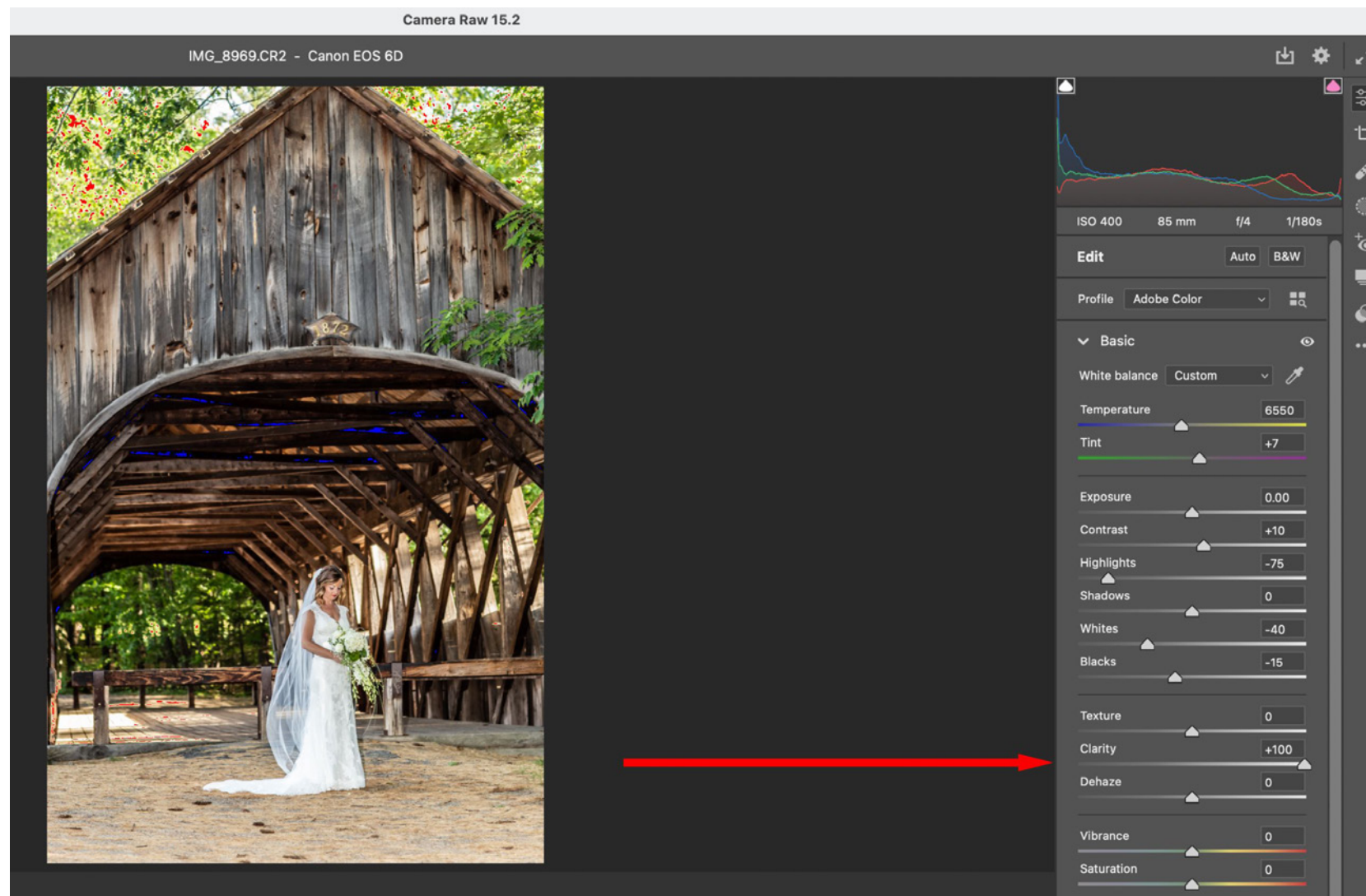
There is no magic number with the Clarity setting. Its effect will vary widely depending on the image. I will tell you this: In all the years since it was introduced, I have never used a setting greater than +40. You can also reduce Clarity by moving the slider in the negative direction. The only time I have attempted a setting in the negative direction was when trying to save an image I had over-sharpened years ago.

As with most of these adjustments, think in baby steps.



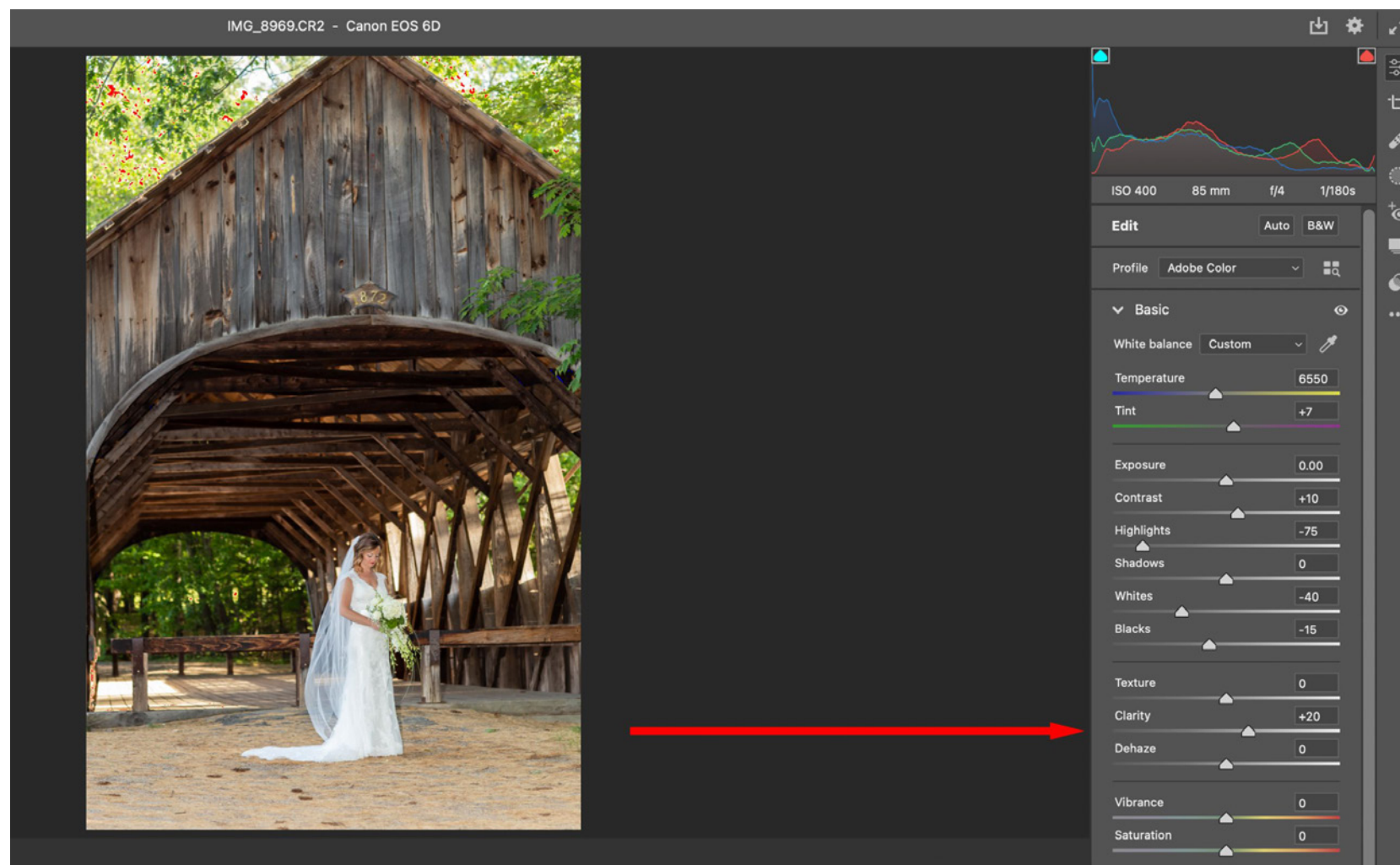
To give you a visual impression of what the Clarity slider will do to an image, I have set it to -100.

034 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault



035 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 035, I have now moved the Clarity slider to +100. Take notice of what the adjustment did to the Histogram. Also, did you notice that it increased the clipping on both ends of the scale?



036 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 036, I have set the Clarity slider to what I determined was the correct setting of +20. How did I come to that decision? I gradually moved the slider in the positive direction while watching the image, the Histogram, and the clipping indicators. As I said, there is no magic number, or scale, to determine the Clarity setting. It's a combination of experience and your 'eye.'

I will tell you this:

💡 **Pro Tip:** I determine the Clarity adjustment first while looking at the image in full frame. Then, I zoom in to 100% on the main subject and visually check that area thoroughly for anything that doesn't look right.

Steps Ten & Eleven – Vibrance & Saturation

The Vibrance and Saturation sliders produce similar effects on a photograph but in slightly different ways.

Saturation is an actual thing; it refers to the purity of a color.

Vibrance is something that Adobe made up! The word doesn't even exist in the dictionary.

The Vibrance setting, I believe, was Adobe's attempt at trying to help photographers avoid over-saturating their images. When you push the Saturation levels of color too high, it begins to clip.

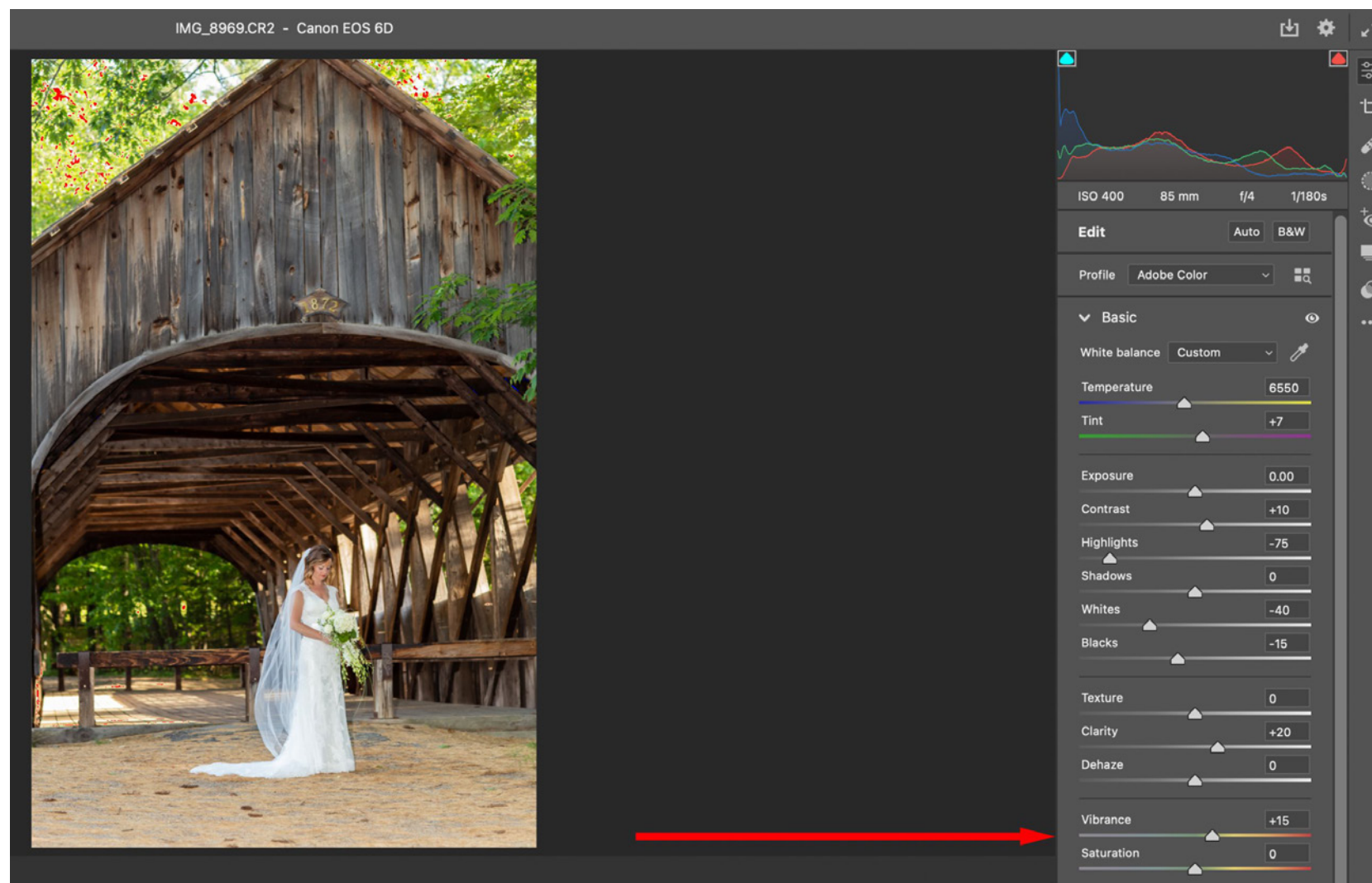
In this definition, clipping is similar to what we discussed in the exposure adjustment section. Clipping really means losing detail. Take the petal of a red rose, for example. When the saturation level is within limits, you will see the surface texture of the petal minor variations in the red tone. If you push the saturation level too high and it becomes clipped, all you will see is a petal-shaped red blob.

Over-saturating color is a common problem in digital photography.

The Vibrance slider increases **color brightness** in primarily mid-tone colors (with little saturation, to begin with). It is also programmed to avoid adding saturation to skin tones.

The Saturation slider radically increases the saturation of colors with a fair amount of color saturation. That's why when you push up the saturation levels, it's usually most pronounced in the reds, blues, yellows, and greens first.

My Fundamental Editing List requires me to work with these two adjustments together and in tandem.

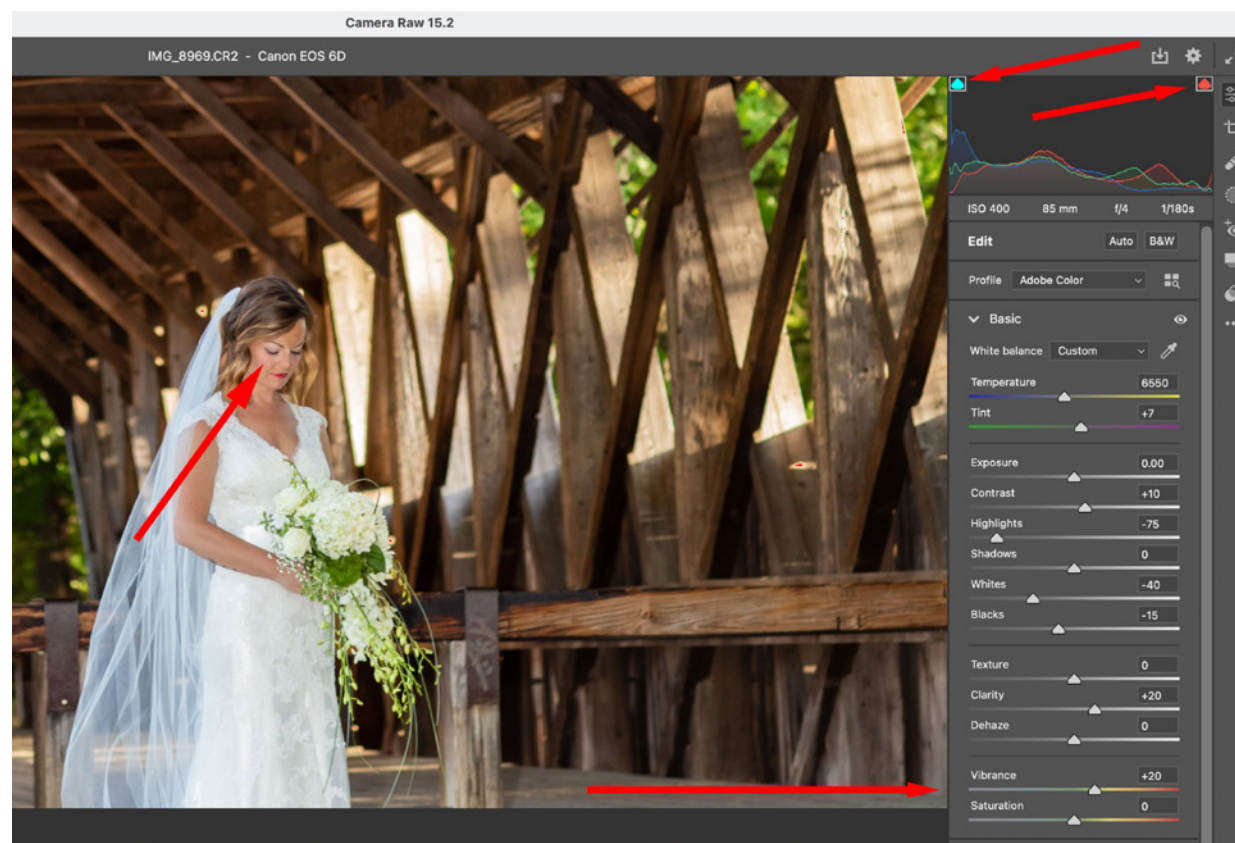


037 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

I always begin with the Vibrance setting while looking at the image in full frame in the Preview window. Remember, Vibrance first and Saturation second!

I rarely move the Vibrance slider toward the negative side. The only reason I can think of doing that would be for some special effect.

I begin by rapidly moving the slider back and forth between 0 and +100. As I identify where I feel the Vibrance (aka mid-tone color brightness) looks ideal, I slow down the movement and narrow the window until I reach a spot that I think looks best. In the case of the bridal portrait, I stopped at +15.



038 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

I then zoomed in for a Preview image of 100%. I want to visually check the color brightness levels of important areas of the subject. In the case of this bridal portrait, my primary areas of concern are her skin tones and her ruby-red lips. At 100%, her skin tone still looked a little flat. So, I tweaked up the Vibrance setting to +20. You'll notice how the Vibrance setting warmed up the wood of the bridge, but it barely did anything to the green foliage. That's because the Vibrance setting affects mid-tone color brightness levels that typically do not have a lot of color saturation (color purity).

Note: Look at the Clipping Indicators above the Histogram. The shadow indicator is cyan and the highlight indicator is red. This tells us that on the shadow end, the blue and green channels are clipped off (blue and green make cyan). This is likely due to that same shadowed foliage in the background. The highlight Clipping Indicator tells us that the red channel is clipped off, but just barely. This is probably due to the intense color of her red lips.

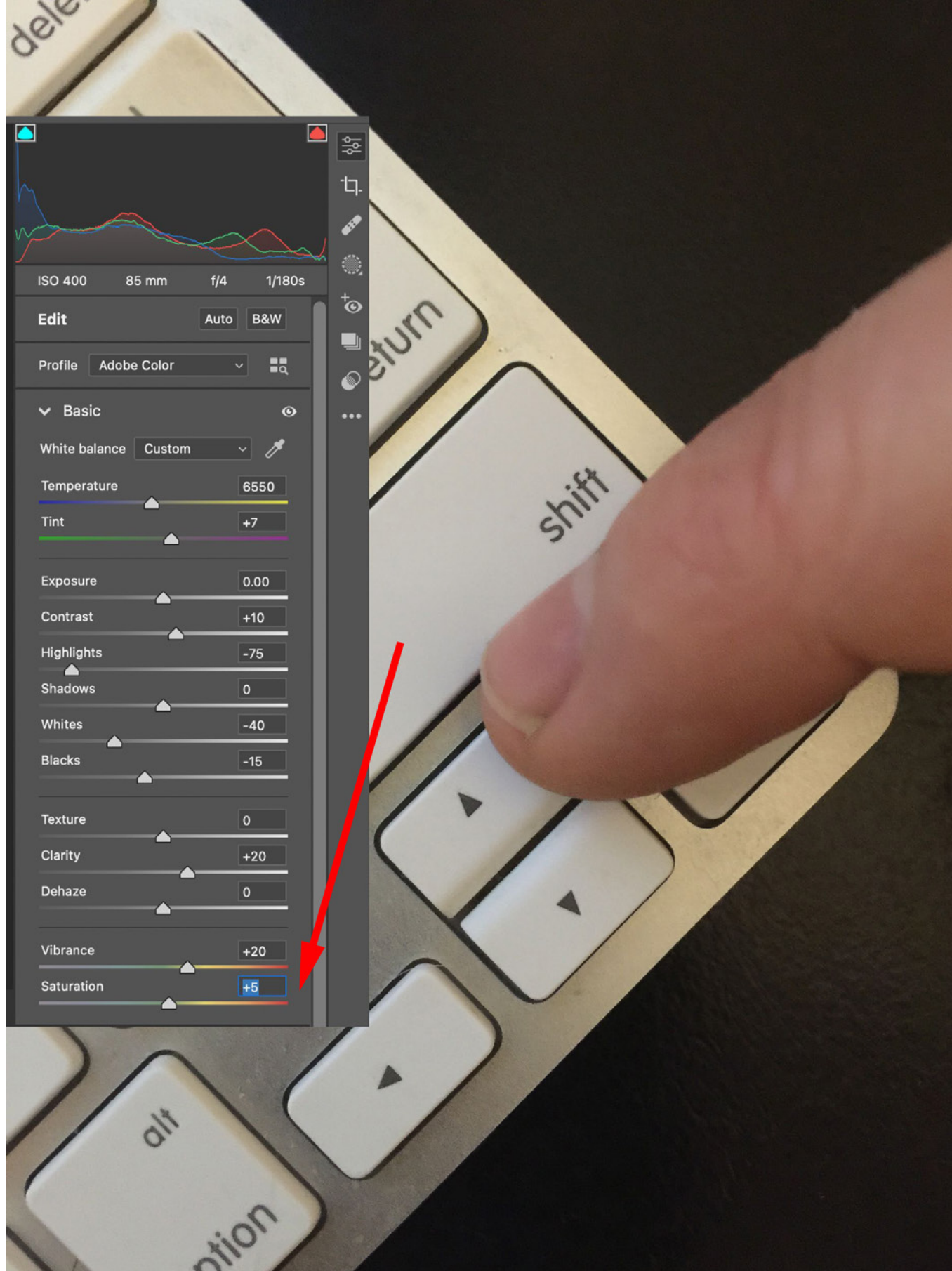
I'm not worried about it at this point, and I will review the situation after completing my fundamental editing list.

This happens often, and I encourage you not to worry about it unless something looks visually off in the Preview window.

Now, we will go to the Saturation slider. Watch the greens and reds.

I will tell you upfront. In portraiture, you need a light hand on saturation levels. If you get excited and go too far, your subject will end up with a strange skin color.

Key Lesson: When adjusting the sliders in the Camera Raw Processing Window, it can be frustrating if you're trying to make a critical adjustment and just sliding it manually. Here is how you can easily make critical adjustments with any of the sliders!



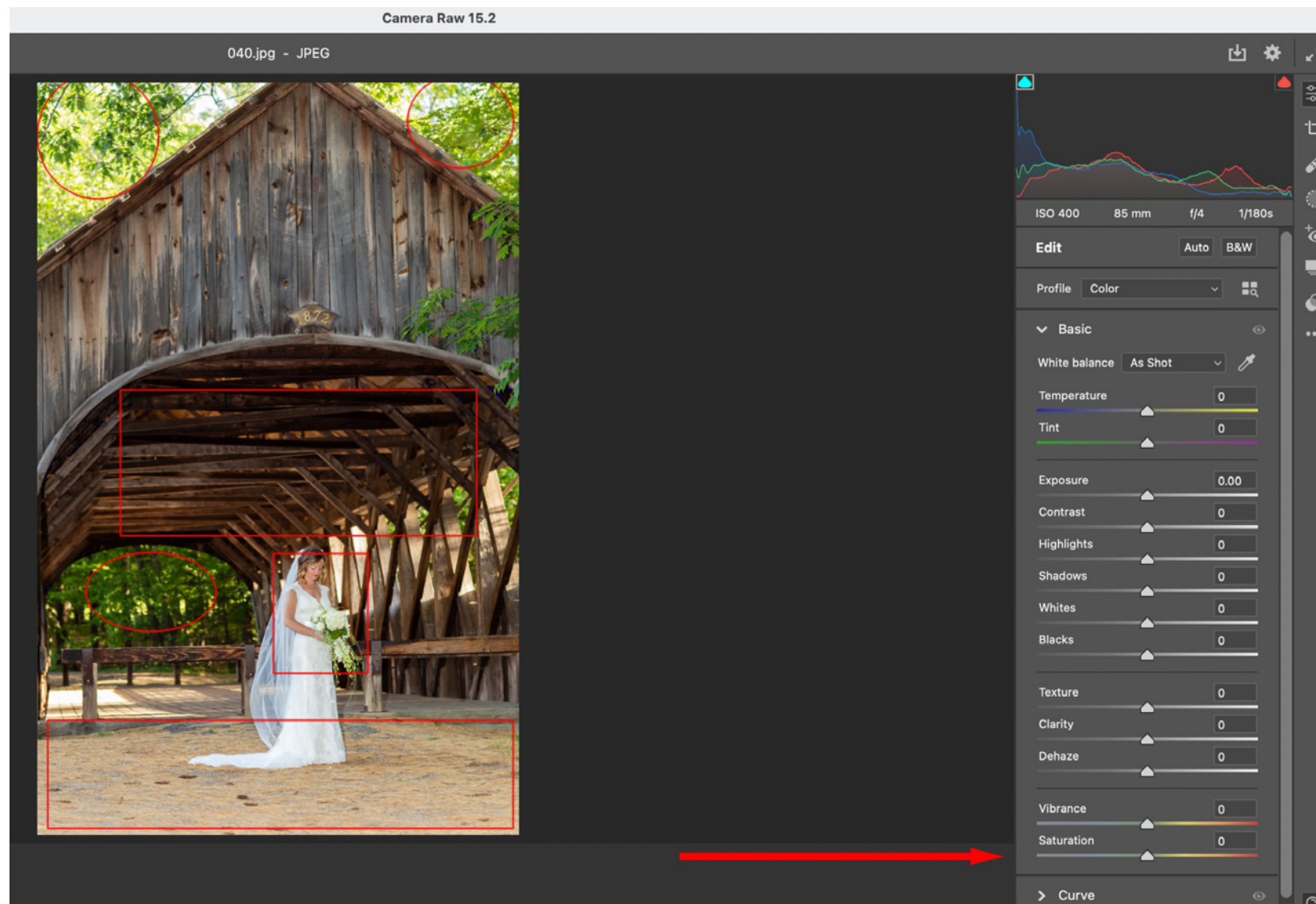
039 – Photograph and Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 039, notice the following. I want to critically adjust the Saturation slider. I highlight the 'Setting Box' so that it is blue. I can now use my keyboard's 'Up' and 'Down' keys to move the slider one number at a time.

Assignment

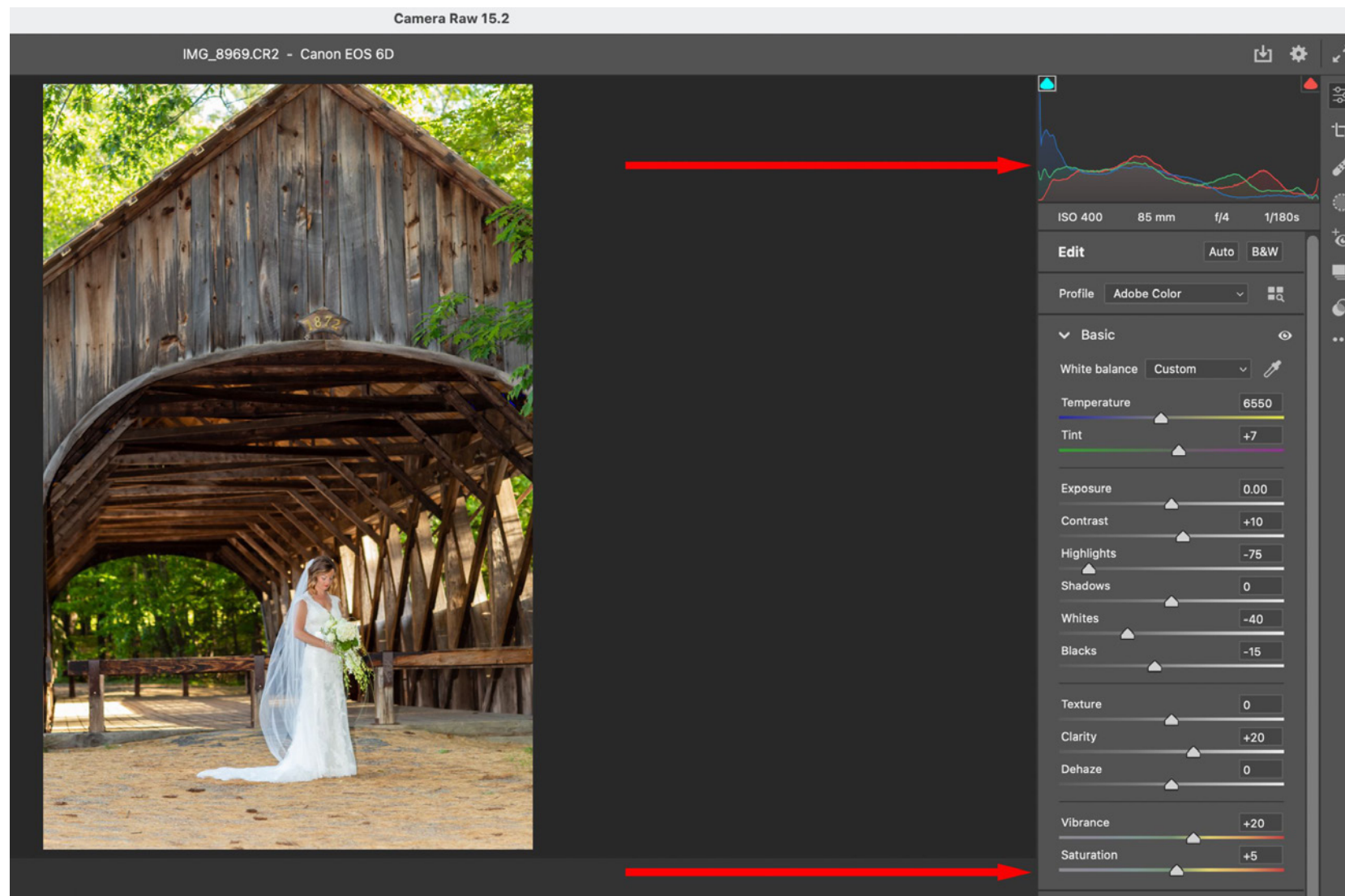
I want you to perform the task I just outlined: highlight the box and use the keyboard keys to move the Saturation slider up and down. Set your image preview to 100%. Center the bride's face in your preview window. Move the Saturation slider one number at a time with the up and down keys. Keep your movements between 0 and +10. I want you to observe the radical change in the color of her lips and the significant changes in the Histogram with each step.

Back to the Saturation Adjustment...



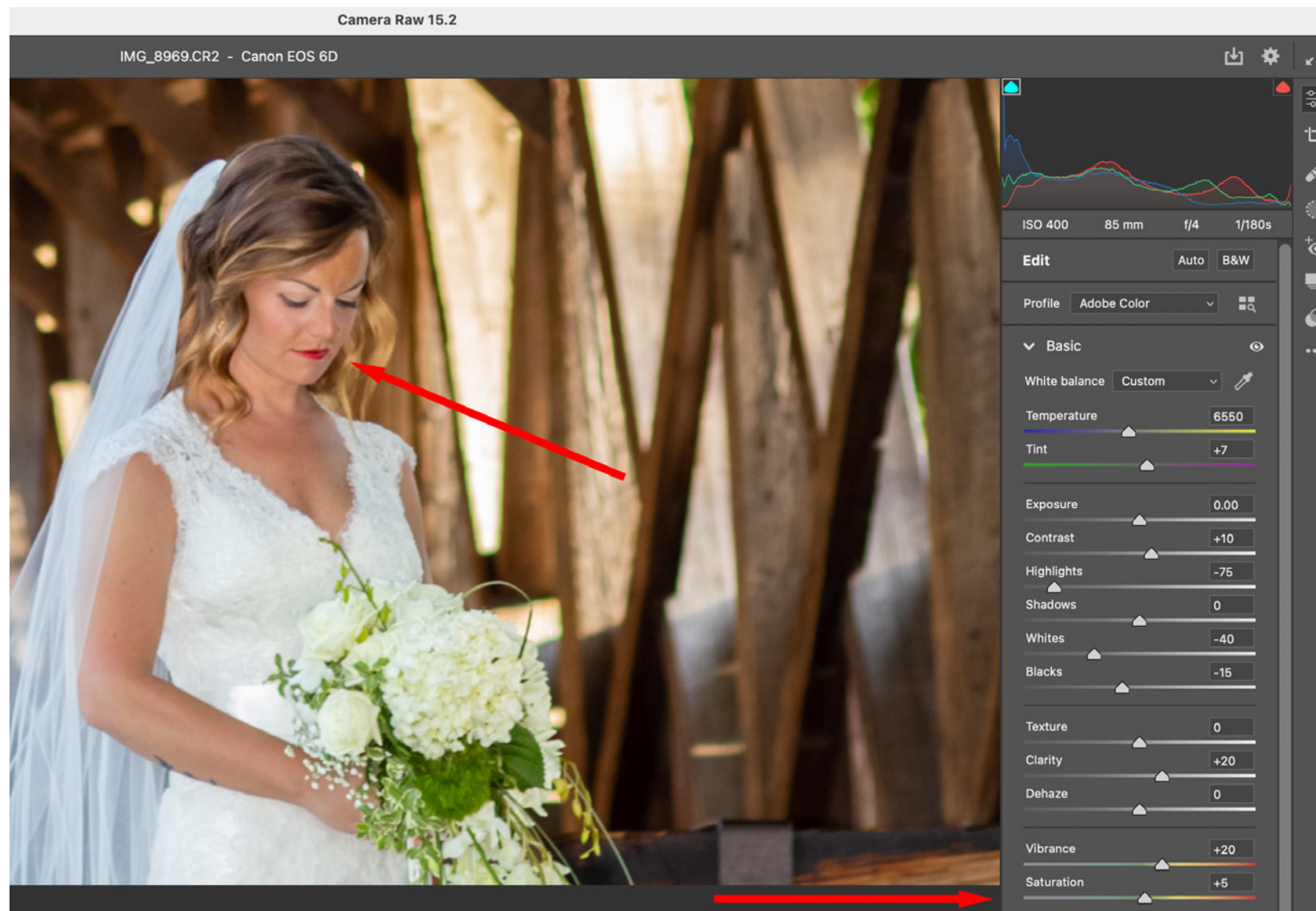
040 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

View the image full-frame and identify areas you wish to affect with the Saturation slider and those you do not want to affect. In Reference 040, the circles represent areas where I want to increase the saturation. The boxes indicate regions in which I do not wish to radically change the saturation, especially her skin tone and red lips.



041 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

I decided that the best saturation setting for the green leaves of the trees was +5. You may say to yourself, 'Self! I don't even see a difference at +5!' This is another one of those areas where we must combine our knowledge of the Histogram with what we see visually. The Histogram changes drastically between 0 and +10 when moving the Saturation slider. It tells us that the saturation levels are changing rapidly, even if our eyes can't detect it.



042 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

The final step of a Saturation adjustment is to zoom in to a preview of 200% and examine essential details. Her skin tone and lips are a major concern in our bridal portrait. She wore ruby red lipstick and wanted her lips to be vibrant and bright. However, we don't want them to dominate by becoming oversaturated and turning into red blobs. My final visual check tells me that her lips look just right!

Step Twelve – Effects: Vignette

Some of you may be saying, 'Wait a minute! Why is a vignette part of the Fundamental Editing List?'

Remember earlier when we identified our three goals for the Fundamental Editing List? Goal number three was to improve the composition.

A vignette is a handy tool for improving composition.

It's funny about using a vignette; there seems to be a hard line drawn in the sand. Photographers seem to like them or really NOT like them. Obviously, I tend to like them.

A vignette is much like saturation, though. It's easy to go too far.

What do I mean by going too far? Anytime you apply any change to your original file (photograph) and the effect itself becomes so dominant that it overtakes the picture, you've probably gone too far. However, sometimes going too far is part of the art! There are no definitive answers in photography.

There are ten million ways to apply a vignette in post-production. I like doing it during the

Fundamental Editing List and in the Camera Raw Processing Window.

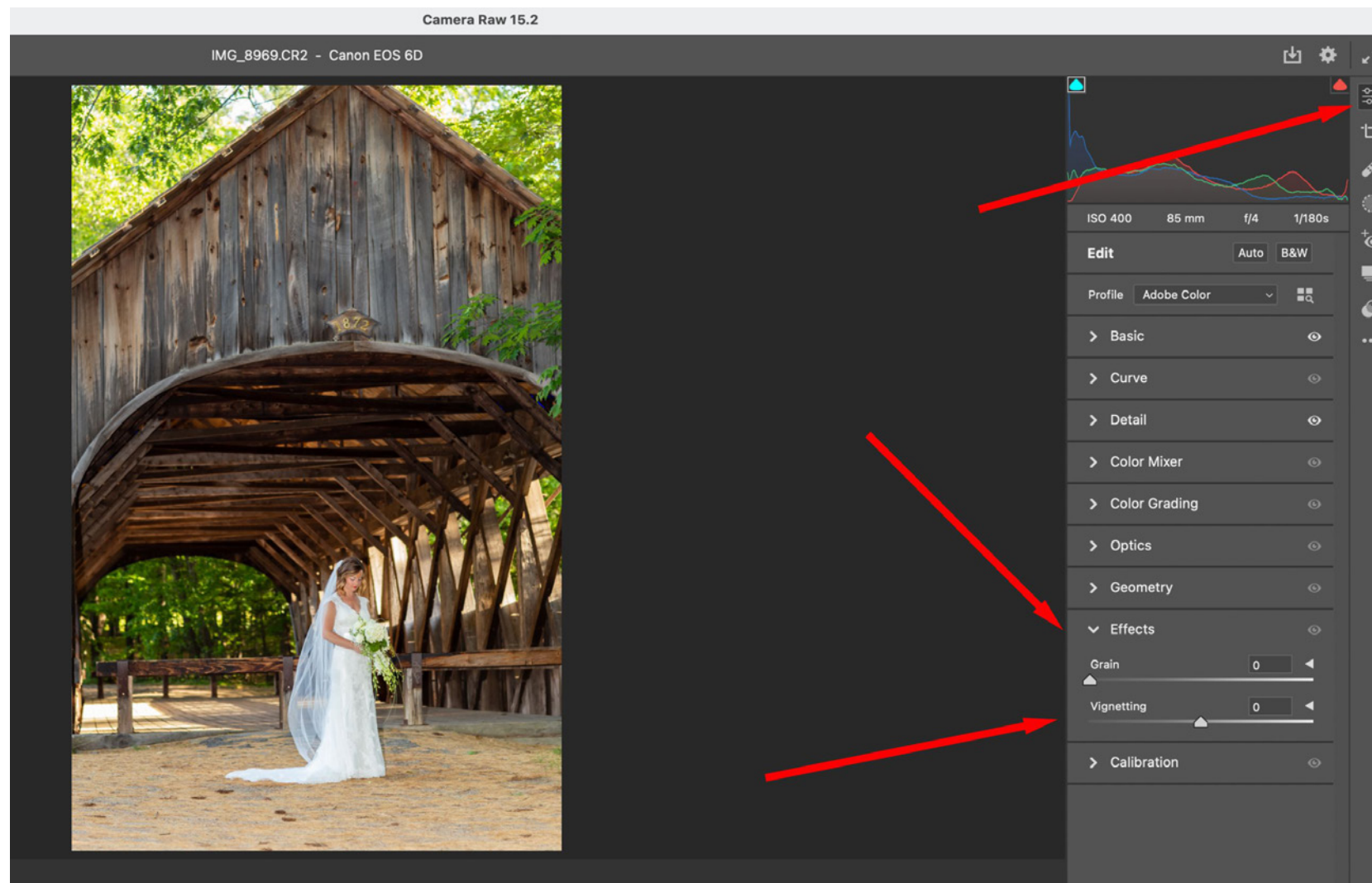
Here is why.

Last year, a national company saw one of my photographs on 500px. They contacted me because they were interested in using it for some advertising. However, they did not like the vignette and wondered if I had a version without it. I opened the image in the Camera Raw Processing Window. I reset the Vignette to 0. Boom! Image sold, and money in my pocket.

Why do I like the use of a vignette so much?

The human eye gravitates towards contrast. It will generally (not always) gravitate toward a lighter area over a darker location. This was how the vignette was initially discovered. Painters would use it to force their viewer's eyes inward toward the subject. As photographers, we can use it the same way.

Let's see how it works for our bridal portrait!



043 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

We find the vignette option within the 'Edits' workspace under the 'Effects' dropdown menu.

Let's say you originally cropped an image and applied a vignette during your fundamental editing. Later, you return to the image and want to remove the crop. The vignette will simply 'adjust' to whatever image area is visible after you remove the crop.

At the far-right side of the 'Vignetting' slider, click the left-pointing arrow so that it turns downward. This reveals all the Vignette options.

Let's look at the tools in the 'Post Crop Vignetting' workspace.

1. **Amount** – The default setting is 0. Moving the 'Vignetting' slider to the right creates a lighter tone area than the middle. Sometimes this is effective. I rarely use it. Moving the 'Vignetting' slider to the left creates an area darker than the middle.

2. There are three '**Style**' options.

Highlight Priority - Applies the post-crop vignette while protecting highlight contrast but can lead to color shifts in darkened areas of an image. Appropriate for images with important highlight areas.

Color Priority - Applies the post-crop vignette while preserving color hues but can lead to loss of detail in bright highlights.

Paint Overlay - Applies the post-crop vignette by blending original image colors with black or white. Appropriate when a soft effect is desired but can reduce highlight contrast.

3. **Midpoint** – The software measures the vignette's size by examining the image's central point outward. The 'Midpoint' setting determines how big the vignette will be from the edges of the frame inward.

4. **Roundness** – The default setting for the vignette is an oval shape. Moving the 'Roundness' slider to the right changes the shape to a circle. Moving the slider to the left changes the form to a rectangle with rounded corners.

5. **Feather** – This slider determines how abruptly the vignette will end. Moving the slider to the left creates a hard-edged line. Moving the slider to the right makes a longer and smoother transition.

6. **Highlights** – This slider is only active if you're creating a dark vignette. Highlight areas within the vignette will often take on a muddy gray look. Moving this slider to the right allows you to restore the highlight areas to their original brightness value without affecting the other tones within the vignette.

Let's apply a vignette to our bridal portrait.

IMG_8969.CR2 - Canon EOS 6D



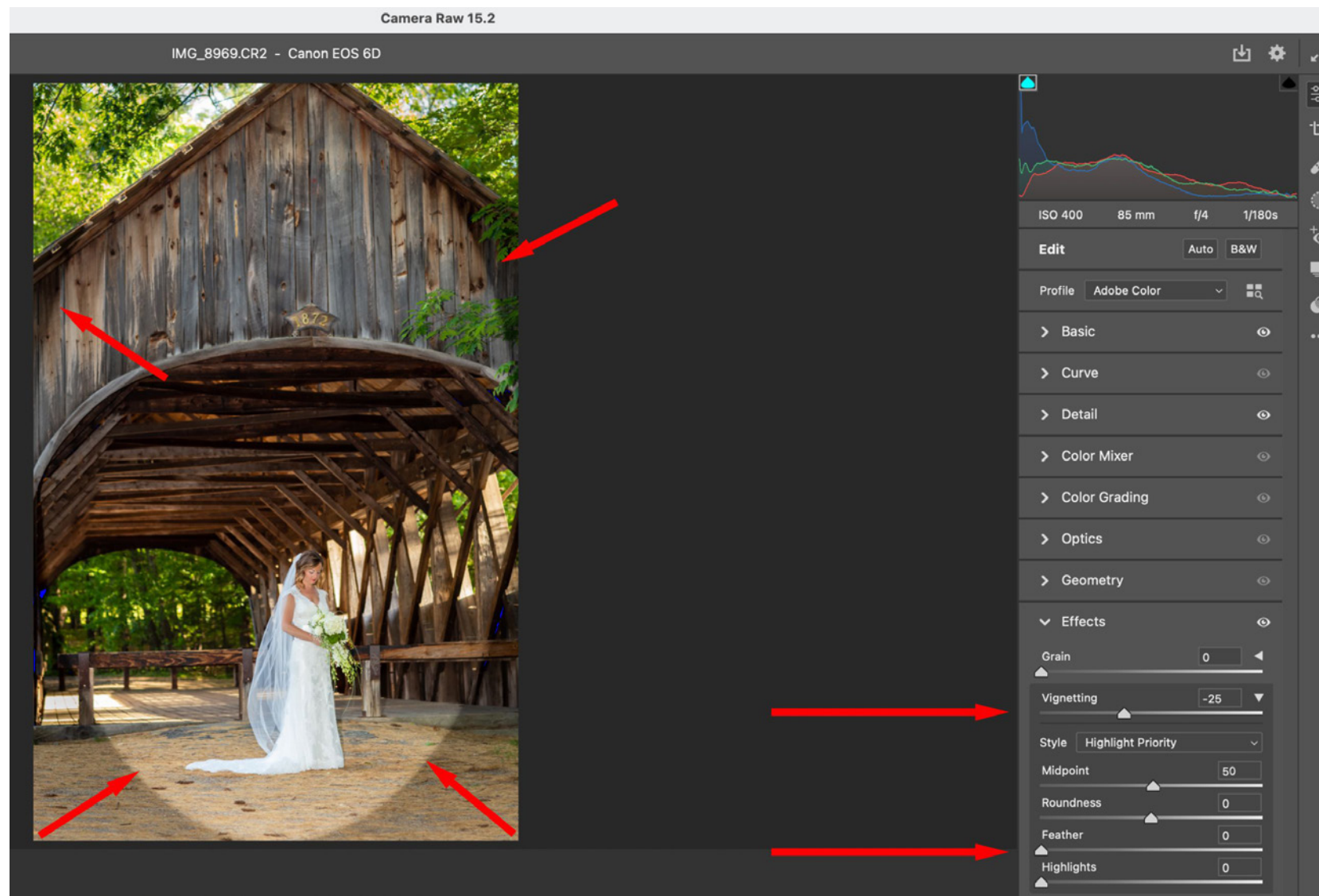
ISO 400 85 mm f/4 1/180s

Edit Auto B&W

Profile Adobe Color

- > Basic
- > Curve
- > Detail
- > Color Mixer
- > Color Grading
- > Optics
- > Geometry
- ▼ Effects
 - Grain 0
 - Vignetting 0
 - Style
 - Midpoint
 - Roundness
 - Feather
 - Highlights
- > Calibration

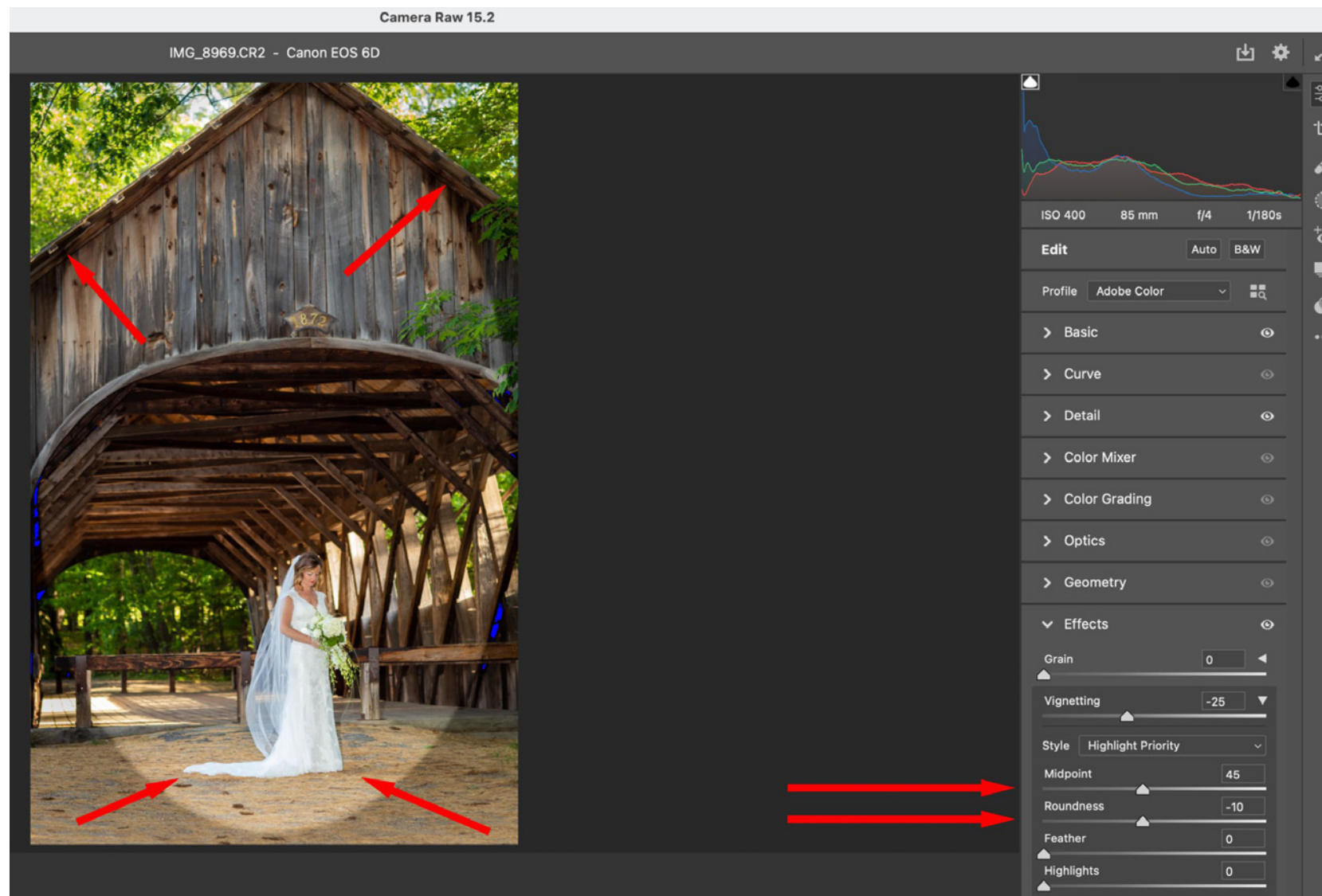
044 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault



045 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

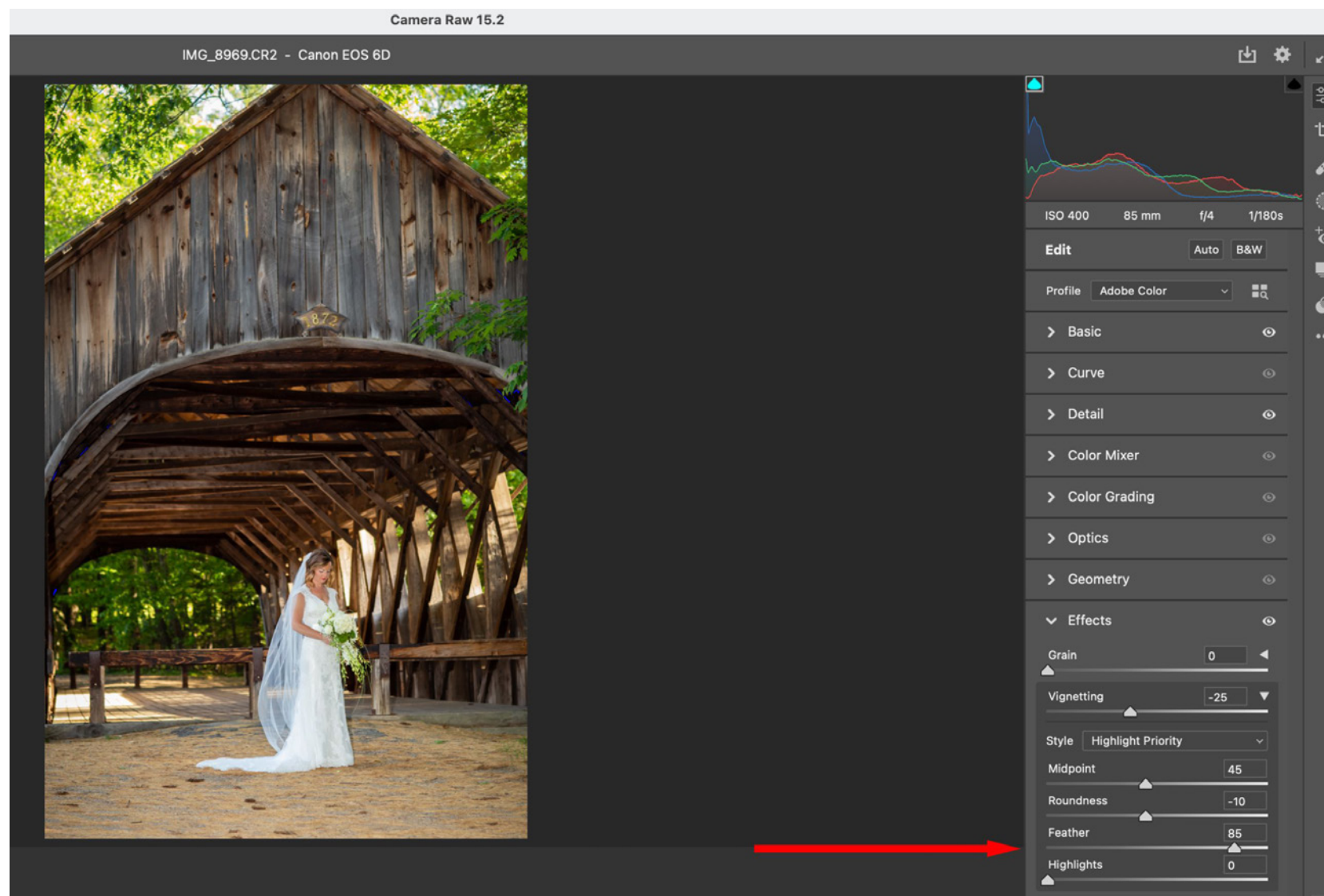
Look at Reference 045. Reduce the Amount setting until you begin to see the vignette effect. Set it close to what you want it to look like in the final product.

Reduce the Feather slider to 0. This will give you a clear picture of where the vignette is located. It will also give you a better idea of how much you have reduced the brightness levels of the outside of the frame created by the vignette versus the inside.



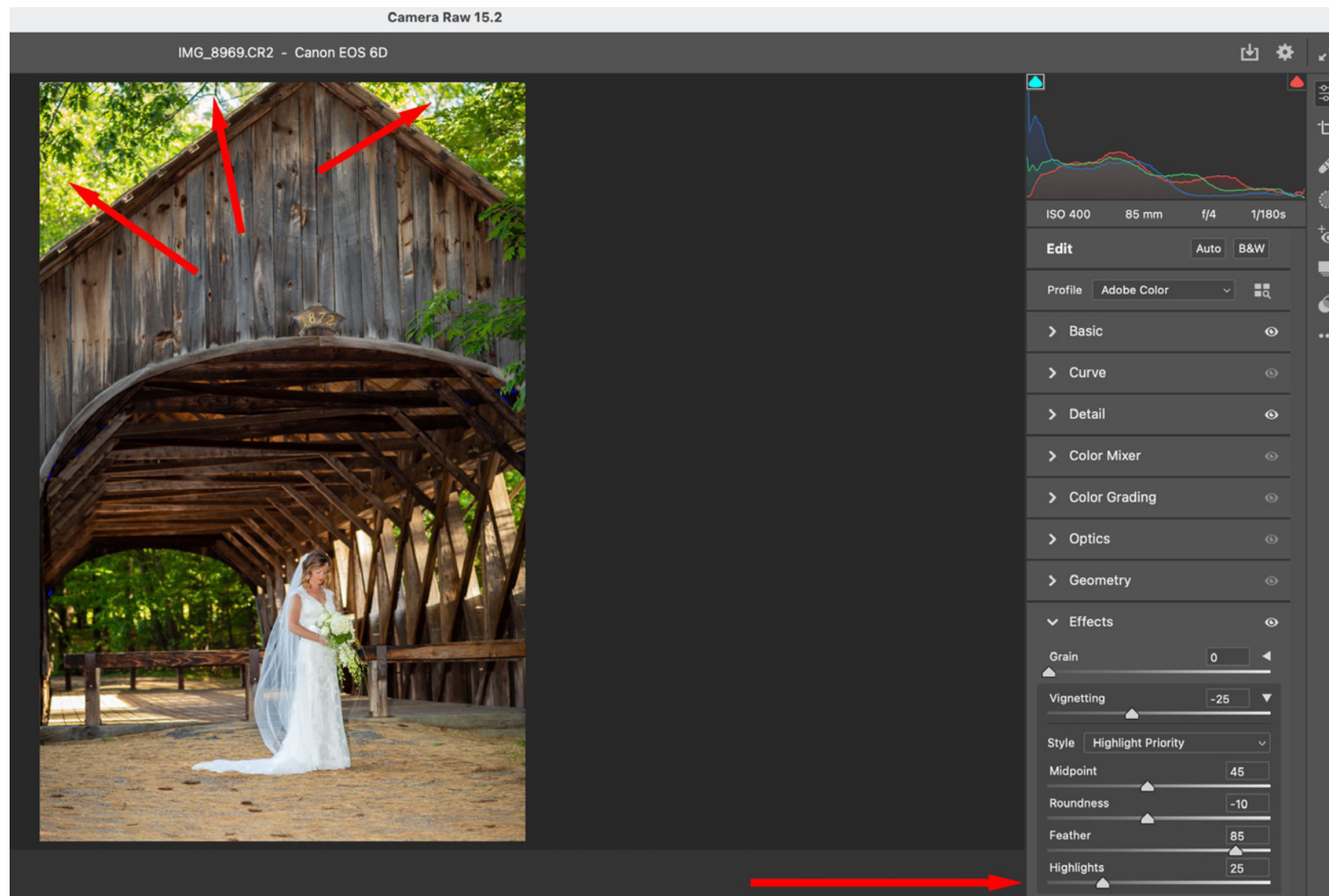
046 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Adjust the Midpoint and Roundness to your satisfaction. For our bridal portrait, I chose -10 for the Roundness setting and 45 for the Midpoint setting. This is illustrated in Reference 046. I wanted the vignette to approach the bride's feet and dress without encroaching on them. Up at the top, I wanted the vignette to touch the bridge without altering most of it.



047 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

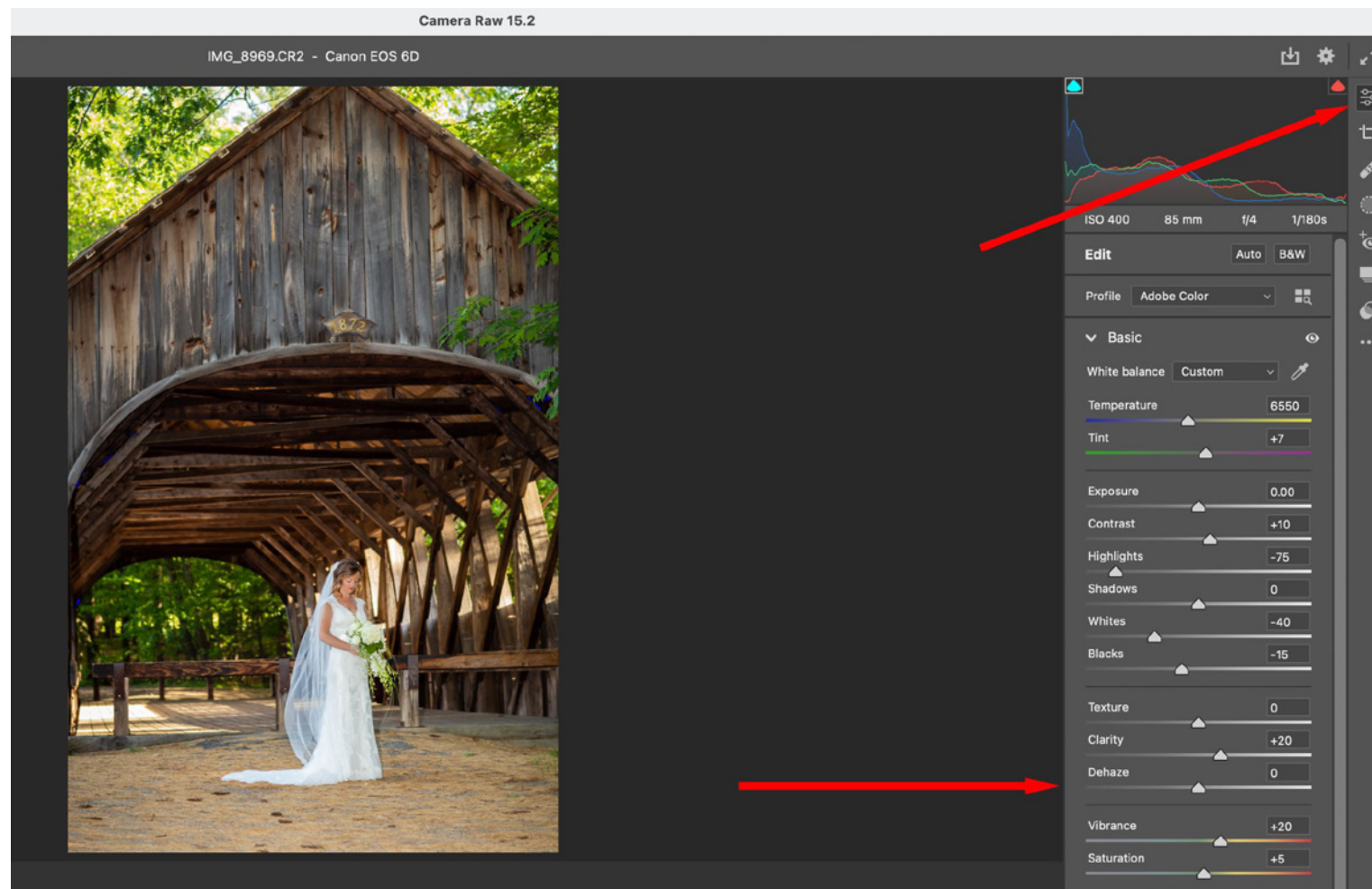
The Feather adjustment relies a lot on personal taste. When I use a vignette, I try to make it as undetectable as possible, so I tend to use a high feathering number. Sometimes I'll use a quicker transition if I'm trying to create a special effect, like the old film camera look. In Reference 047, you'll see that I chose a setting of 85 for the bridal portrait.



048 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

The upper arrows in Reference 048 point to highlight areas within the vignette that took on a gray, milky look. By raising the Highlights slider to 25, I've restored them back to their original brightness levels. This is an excellent technique to 'mask' the fact that you've applied a dark vignette.

Key Lesson: Milky gray highlights near the edge of the frame were always kind of a downer when applying a dark vignette. Often, I would skip using it because of this. The Highlight slider is a relatively new feature within Photoshop. Using it is an excellent way to 'mask' the fact that you've applied a dark vignette!



049 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Step Thirteen – Effects/Dehaze

The Dehaze tool is also relatively new to Photoshop.

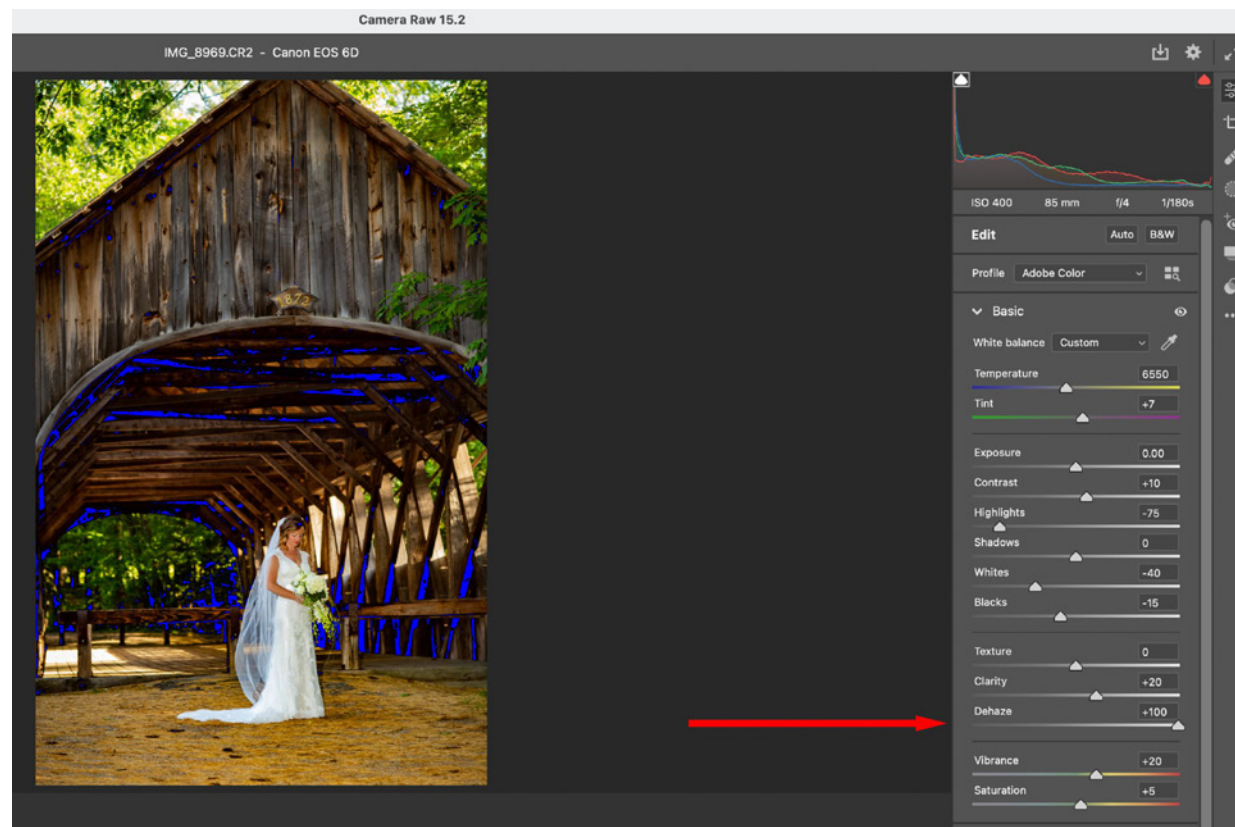
Essentially, it adds contrast and saturation to an image that is low in contrast and saturation. Adobe's early comments on the Dehaze tool were that it helped remove the distance haze often found in landscape photography. Supposedly, it has an algorithm that analyzes the file and uses just enough contrast and saturation to remove the hazy look.

I don't use this tool that often. You're probably wondering why it's in my Fundamental Editing List. For specific purposes, it works really well. So, it's on my Fundamental Editing List to be considered during the Camera Raw Processing phase. Our bridal portrait doesn't need this adjustment. There isn't any haze to contend with.

You want to look at this tool when you have hazy landscapes, underwater pictures, fog, or smoke; anytime your image lacks contrast.

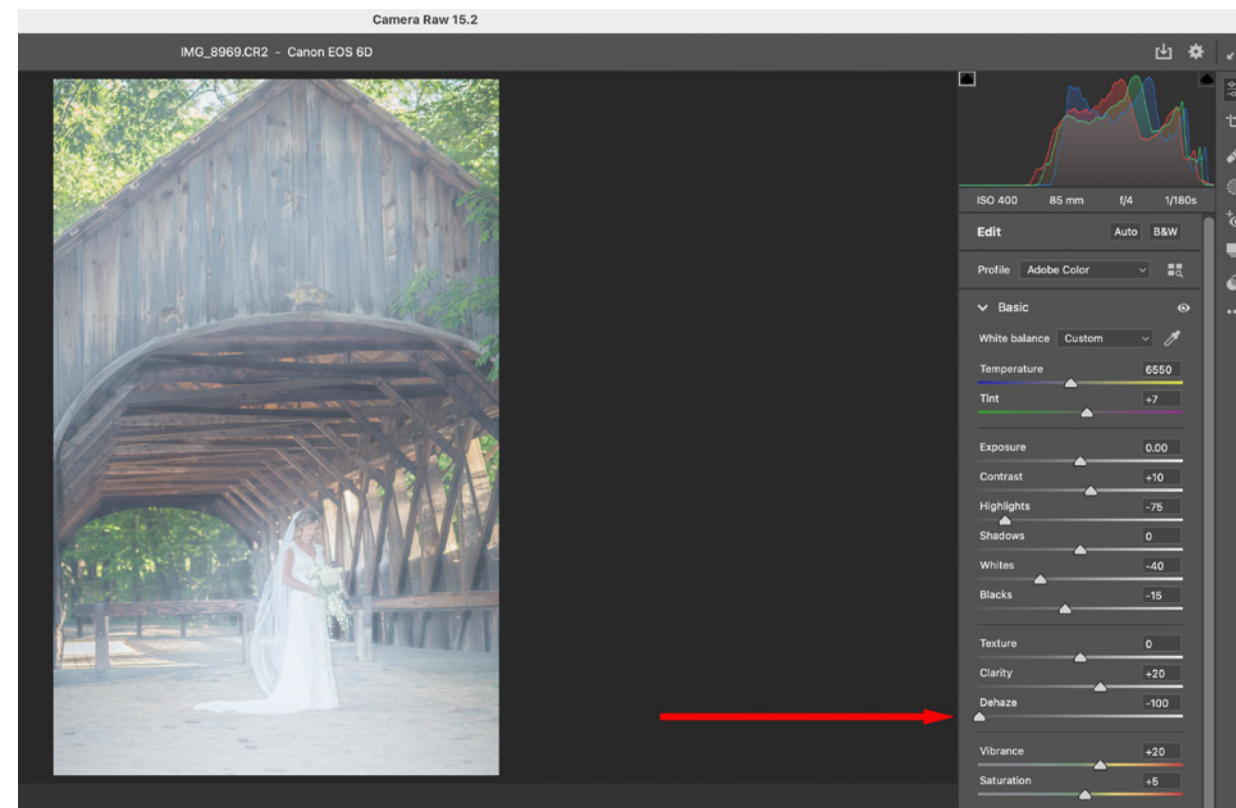
I will give you a quick look at what it does to this picture, even though we don't need it.

The Dehaze slider is located in the 'Edits' workspace within the 'Basic' dropdown menu. It defaults to 0 (Reference 049).



050 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 050, I have moved the Dehaze slider all the way to the right; I set it at +100. You can see that the effect on the photograph is quite dramatic. This is what I don't like about this tool. It applies the effect globally. It would have been nice if Adobe had implemented some function to control where the result would be applied. If you have haze in the distance of your landscape photograph but not in the foreground, then you don't want it applied to the foreground. Still, sometimes this tool provides the magic fairy dust that an image needs!




051 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 051, you see the result of moving the Dehaze slider entirely to the left (-100). It removes most of the contrast and saturation. I can't think of a good reason to do this unless you attempted to create a special effect.

Key Lesson: Keep the Dehaze step on your Fundamental Editing list, but use it with a deft hand and a critical eye.

Step Fourteen – Localized Adjustments with the Adjustment Brush

I have written extensively about using the Adjustment Brush, now known as the 'Brush' tool. If you've read many of my articles, guides, and books, you know I'm a huge fan of the Brush. I honestly believe that it is one of the tools that separates amateurs from professionals.

 **Key Lesson:** You really need to learn how to use the Brush tool!

Because I have covered it rather extensively already, I won't do that here in this guide. In this guide, I'm just going to show you what I did to this bridal portrait for my Fundamental Editing.

If you want to know more about the Adjustment Brush, check out these videos and books. They're all free.

Recommended Videos:

- [Fixing a Photograph: Baby Ducks](#)
- [Fixing a Photograph: Woman on Bridge](#)

Recommended Reading:

- [How to Improve a Wildlife Photograph with Post-Processing](#)
- [How to Use the RAW Brush Tool for Added Impact in Your Photos](#)

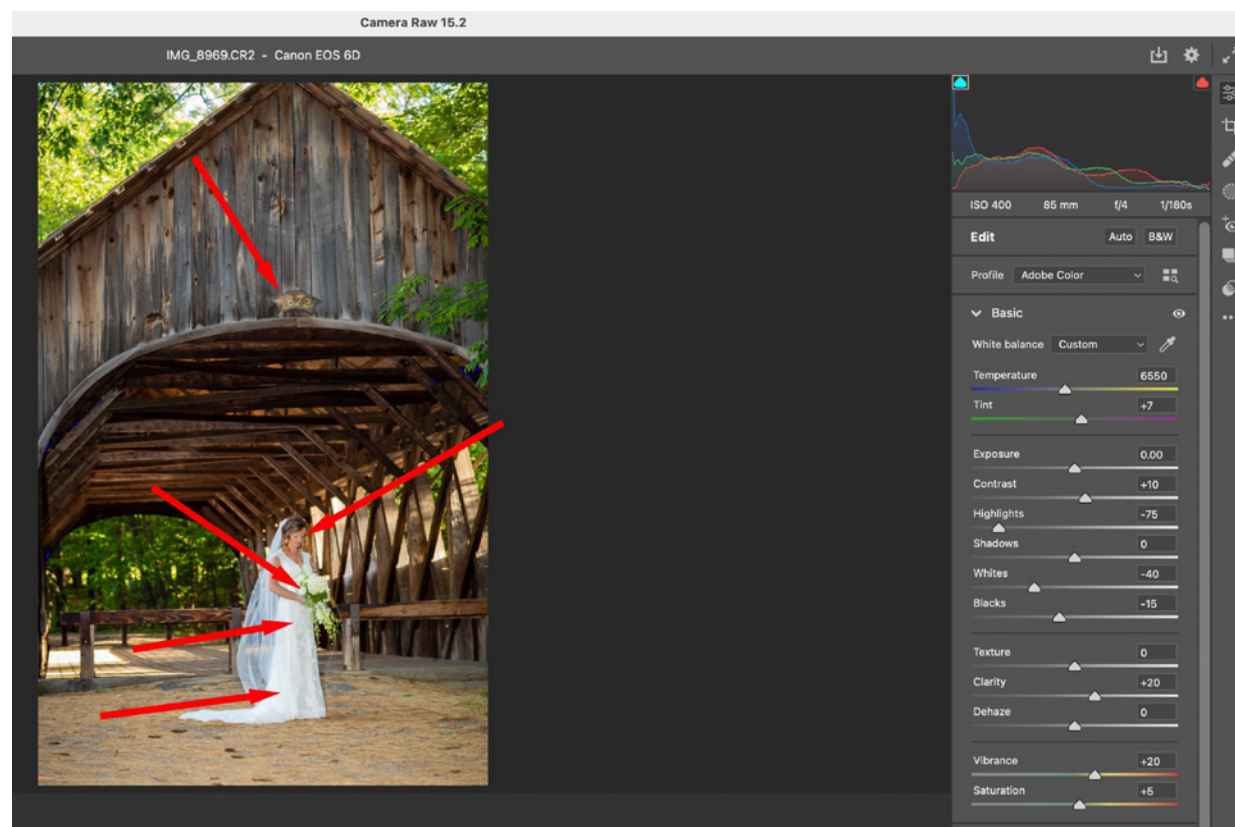
Numerous adjustments can be made using the Brush tool.

The main advantage of using the Brush is that you can place highly accurate, highly localized adjustments to the photograph.

There are four main objectives where I like to use the Brush tool.

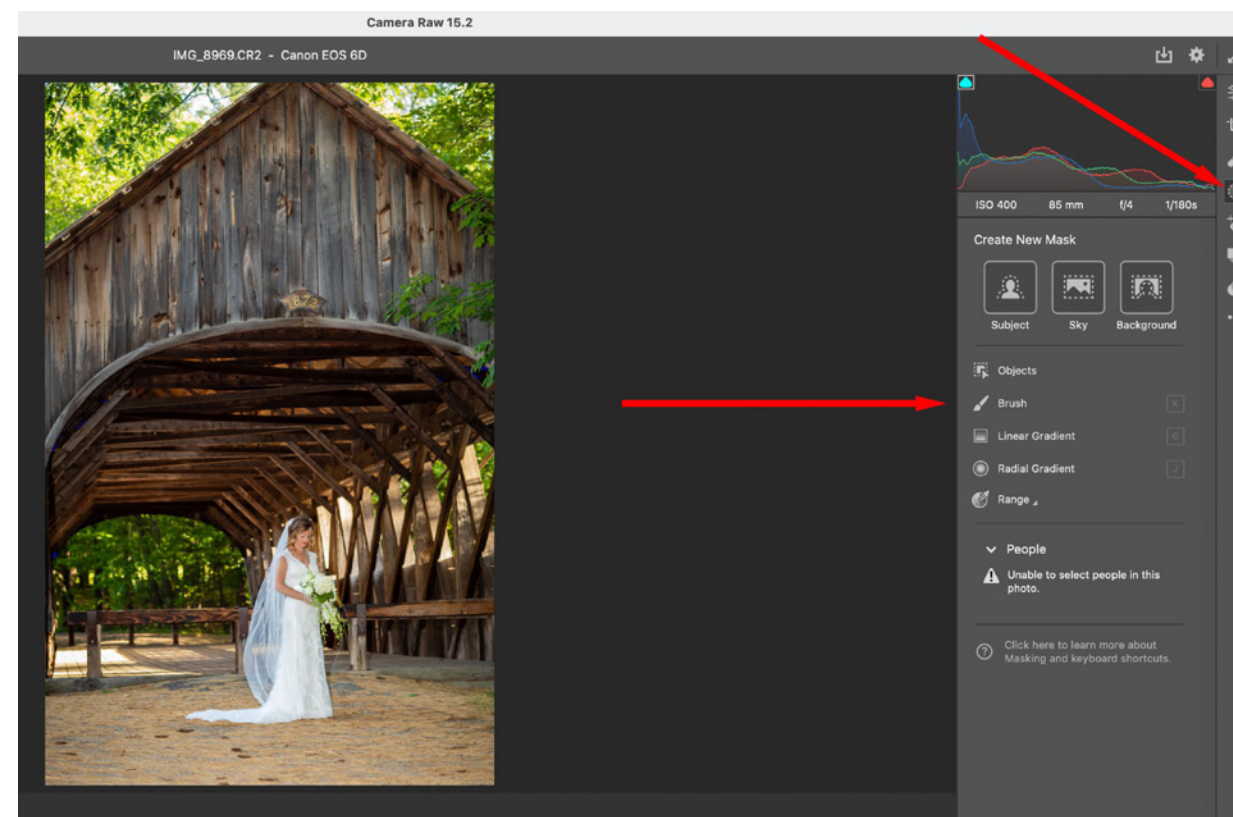
1. Localized exposure adjustment
2. Localized sharpening
3. Localized saturation control
4. Localized color balance adjustment

Let's work on our bridal portrait.



052 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

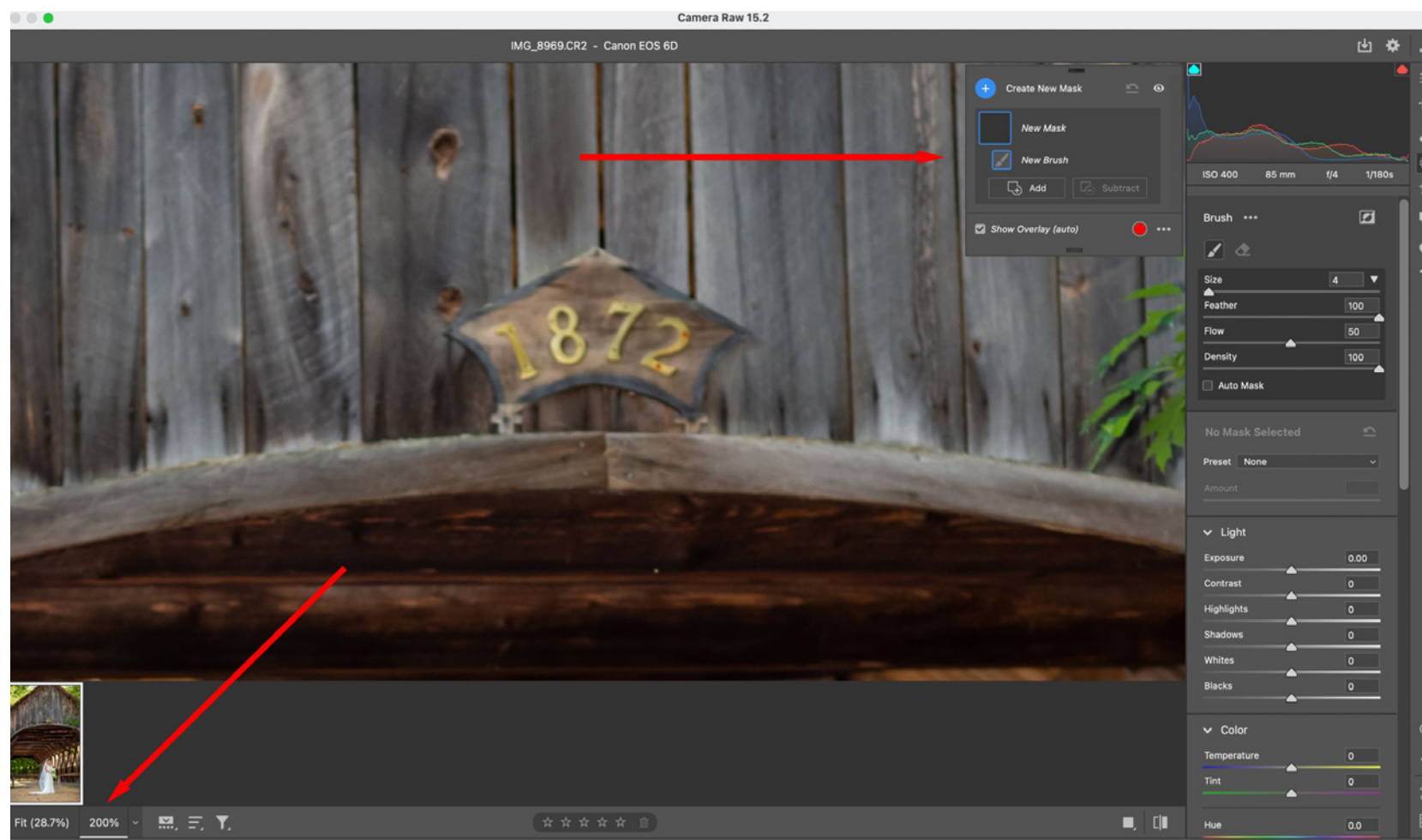
I always start by identifying the areas that I want to work on. In Reference 052, I have identified my areas. I will slightly decrease the exposure on the flowers and dress to bring back some highlight detail. I will sharpen the bride's hair, face, upper dress, and flowers. The age and location of this bridge were important to the bride. I will make localized adjustments to the '1872' to make it pop from its dark wooden background!



053 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

The upper far-right arrow in Reference 053 points to the Masking radio button. Click on that button. The lower right-facing arrow points to the Masking toolbox. Click on the Brush tool.

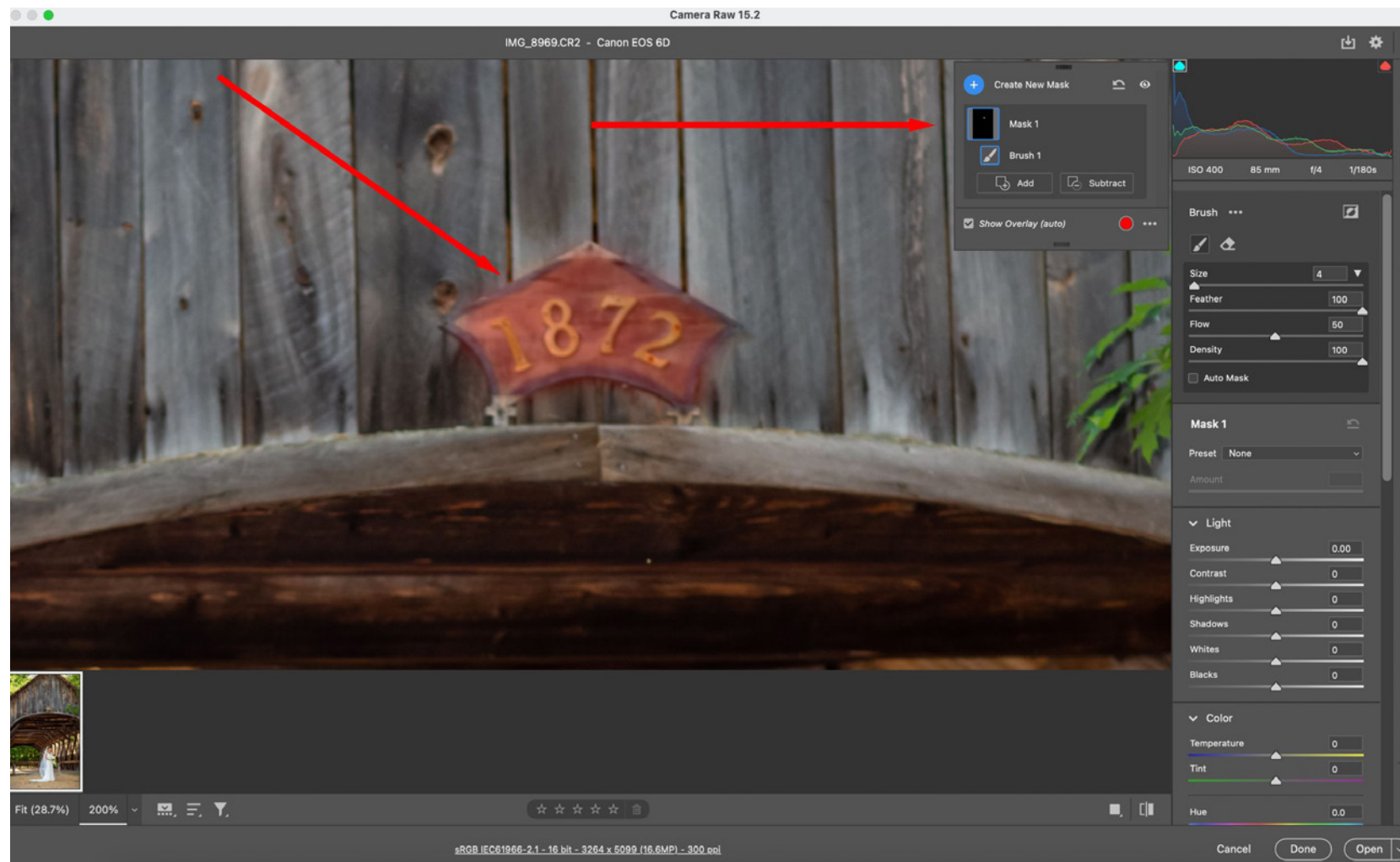
Note: Adobe has incorporated some levels of automation into the masking process. I don't use these, especially in my fundamental editing. I find that I can work faster and more accurately on my own. Once inside Photoshop, I sometimes use their AI masking tools.



054 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

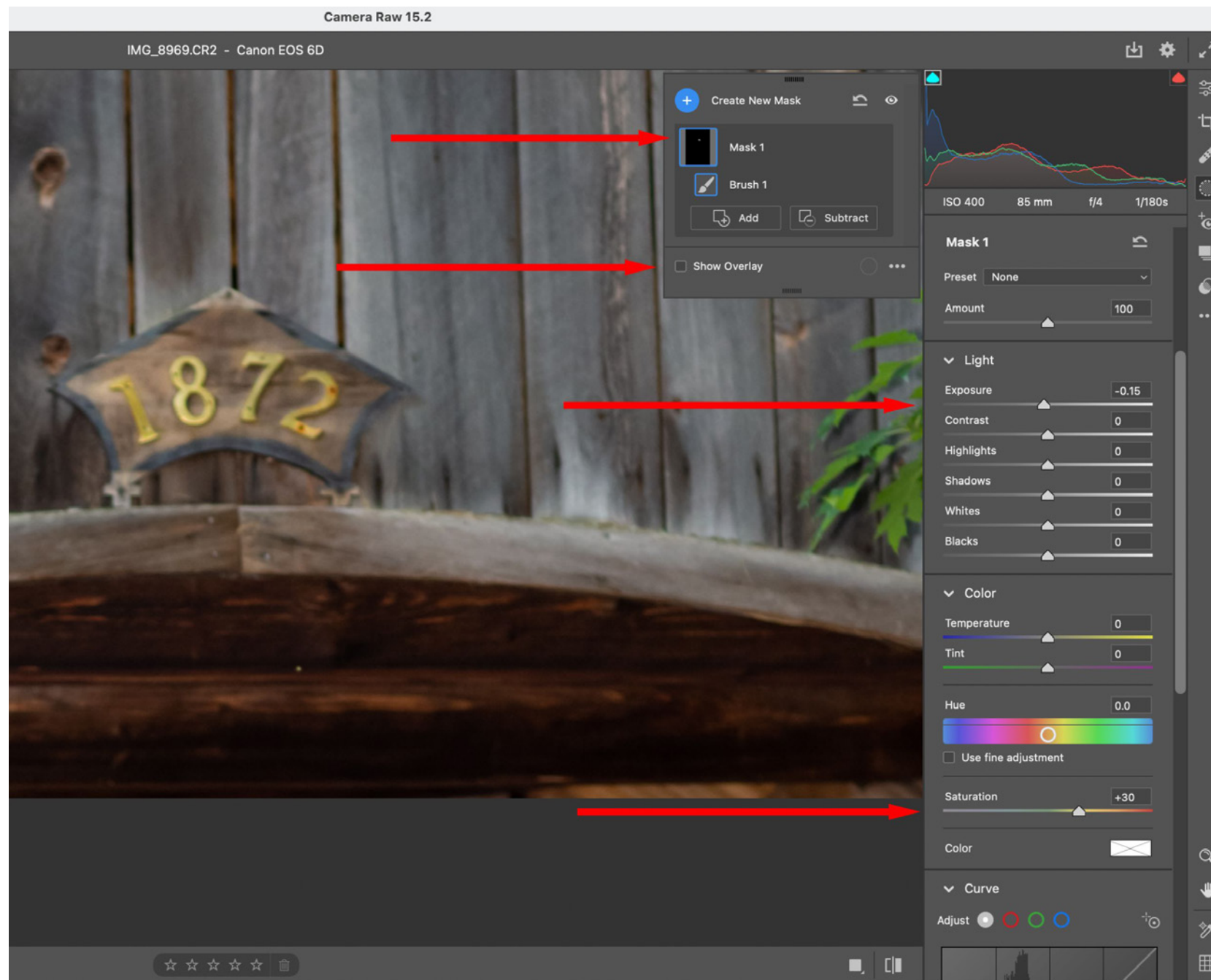
First, I'm going to work on the '1872.' When you're editing, unless you're attempting a special effect, you should try and keep things looking natural. I want to make the sign pop out slightly from the bridge, but I don't want to make it look like a neon sign glowing up there. Again, I won't get into many details about the 'how.' This is about illustrating workflow.

1. Set the Preview window to 200% and navigate to the '1872' sign.
2. Click on the Brush tool in the Masking selection box.
3. The Mask navigation box opens, as well as the Brush toolbox.



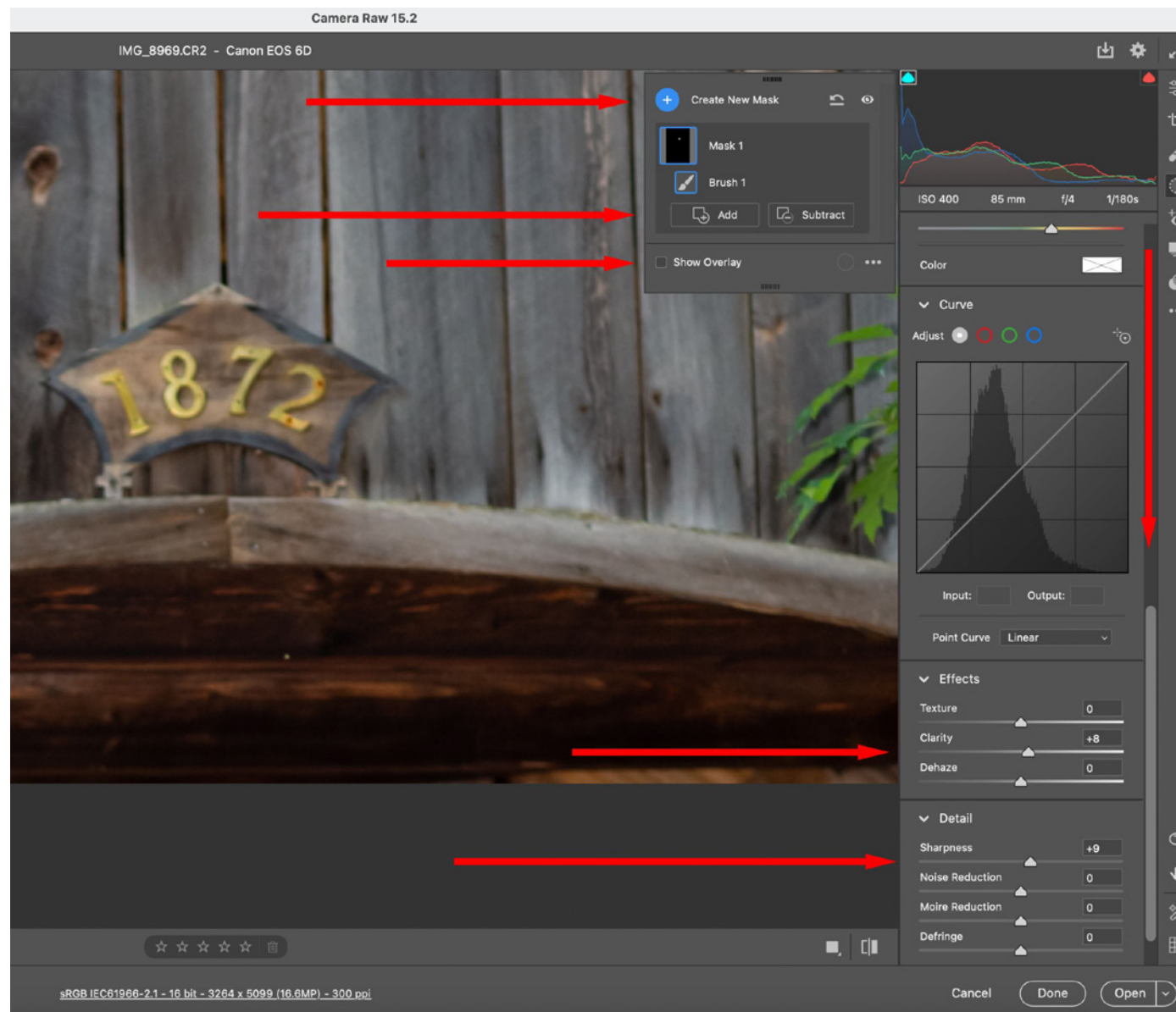
055 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

4. Set the Brush size and attributes.
 5. Paint over the sign, and a red overlay appears where you have painted. Inside the Masking Navigation Box is a checkbox called 'Show Overlay (Auto).'
- When this is checked, the Overlay Mask will appear and disappear when you start making edits. You can always turn it back on by clicking the box. To the right of that is a button that allows you to set the color of the masking overlay. I prefer red, but I sometimes have to change it if the photo being edited is red. The Overlay Mask inside the Navigation box is black. As you paint on the Preview window, parts of it will turn white, indicating where the mask is located and where the edits will be applied. This is crucial when you start getting into many masks. You must know which one you're working on.



6. I reduced the Exposure slider to -0.15 and the Saturation slider to +30. Notice how the Overlay Mask has disappeared.

056 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault



057 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

7. The Masking toolbox is longer than the screen allows, so you must navigate down to find the additional tools.

8. I added +8 on Clarity and +9 on the Sharpness.

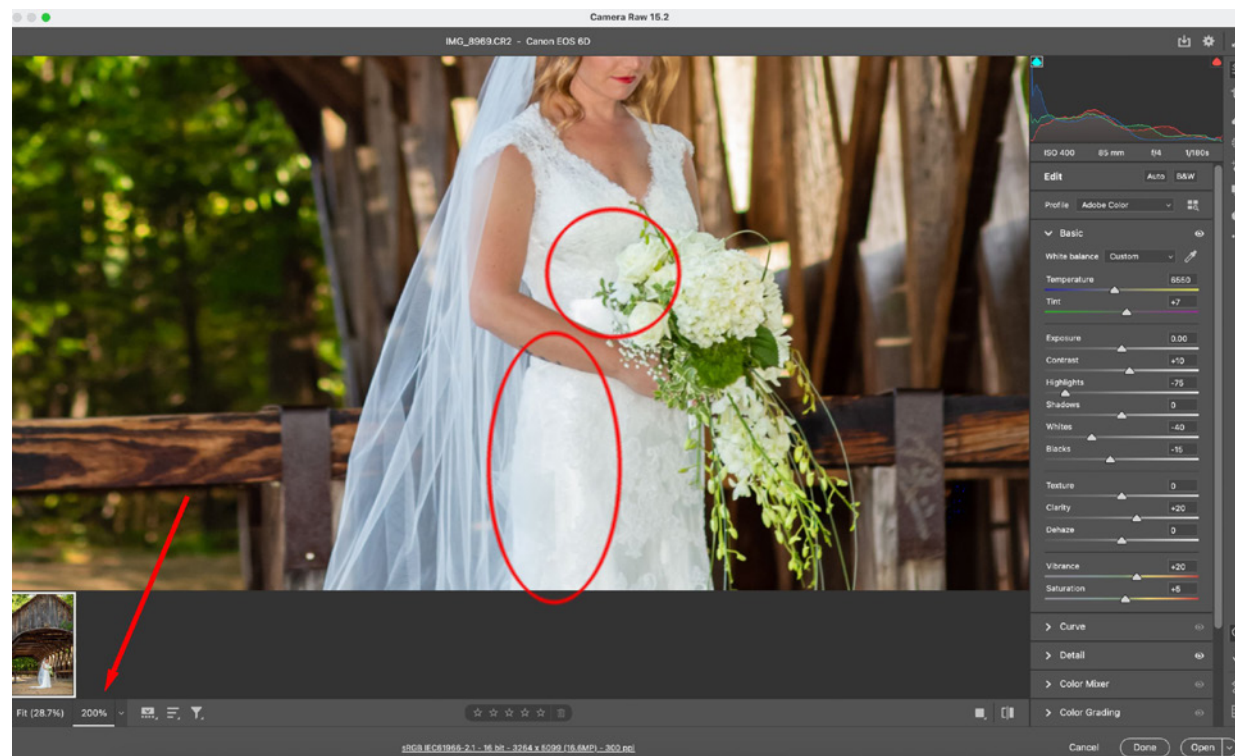
Note: If you want to create a new mask, click the '+' Create New Mask button at the top. If you wish to change an existing mask, highlight it in the Masking Navigation window and click 'Add' or 'Subtract.' You can turn the 'Show Overlay' button on and off to see the result of the edit.

Key Lesson: If you're using post-production to sharpen something within your image, think about the original file. Was that subject 'soft' because it was outside the depth-of-field window? If it was, then trying to sharpen it **too much** will make it look artificial. Here is another point about sharpening. By using the localized sharpening with the Brush tool, I typically only have to apply minimal global sharpening later. That makes my final picture look better by avoiding over-sharpening. I'm also using a technique of composition, which is called **point of focus**. Point of focus means that a viewer's eyes will tend to gravitate immediately toward the sharpest part of the picture. By selectively 'picking' my sharpest spot in the photograph, I'm helping to direct the viewer to where I want them to go!



After doing detailed work with the Brush tool, you always want to zoom back out to a full image view. It's essential to see how your changes look within the context of the overall scene. To me, the '1872' sign now really pops from the wooden bridge without looking fake.

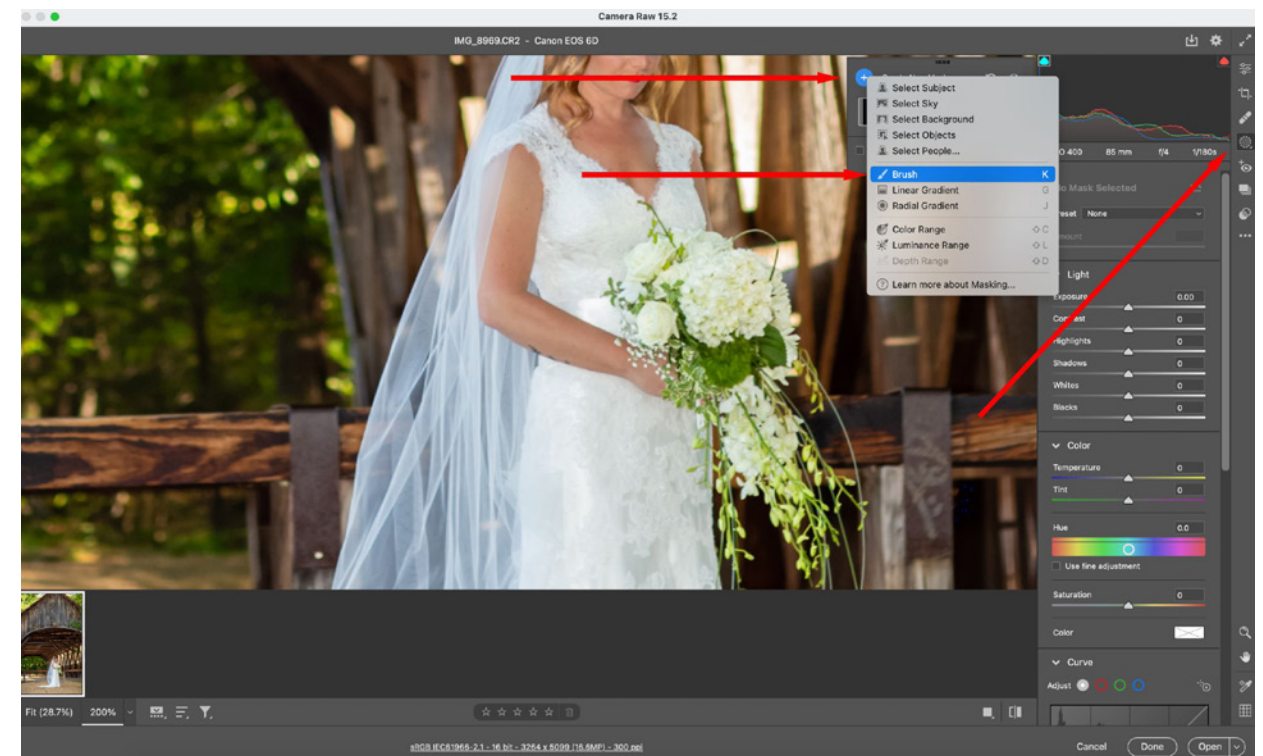
058 – Photograph and Graphics by Kent DuFault



059 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

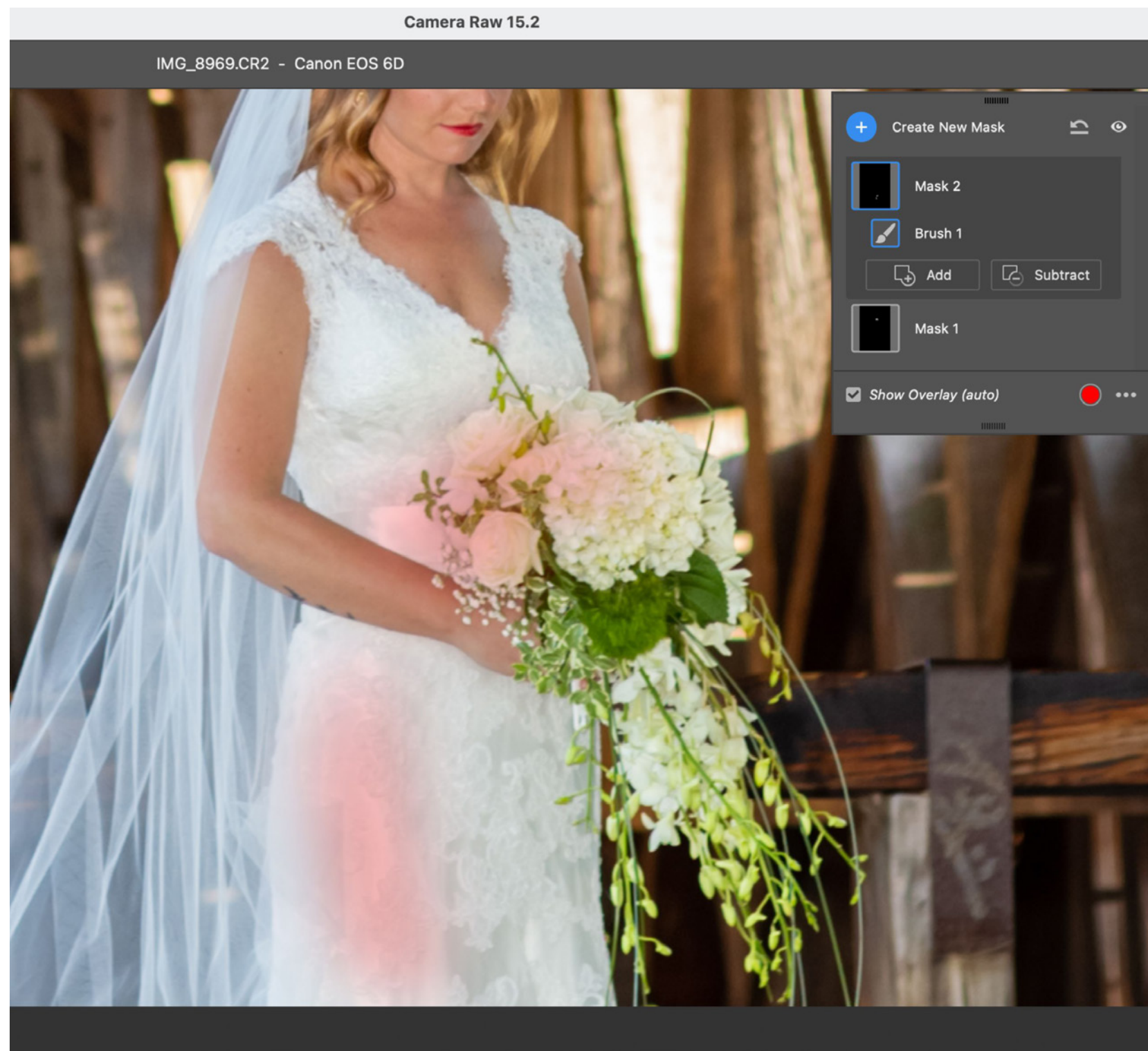
Now, we are going to work on the dress and the flowers. I have identified two areas where the whites and highlights are slightly blown out. We are going to dial them back as best we can.

1. Set the Preview window to 200% and position the target area in the middle of the screen.



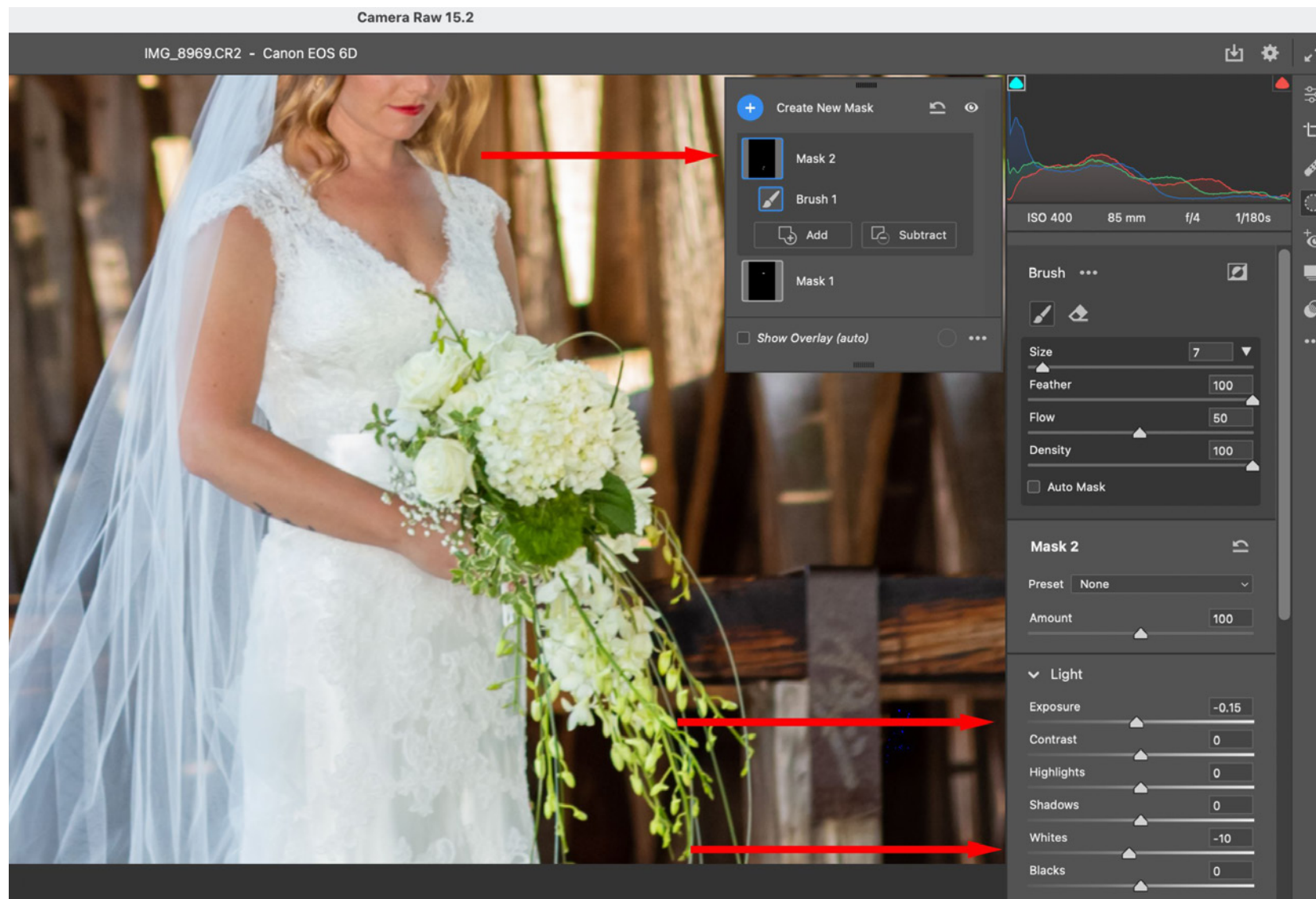
060 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

2. Select Masking and click on 'Create New Mask.'
3. Choose the Brush option.



Reference 061 shows us the mask that we will use to adjust the highlights on the flowers and the dress. Notice that we now have two masks in the Mask Navigation box. The first mask was the sign, and the second mask was for the highlights on the flowers and the dress.

061 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault



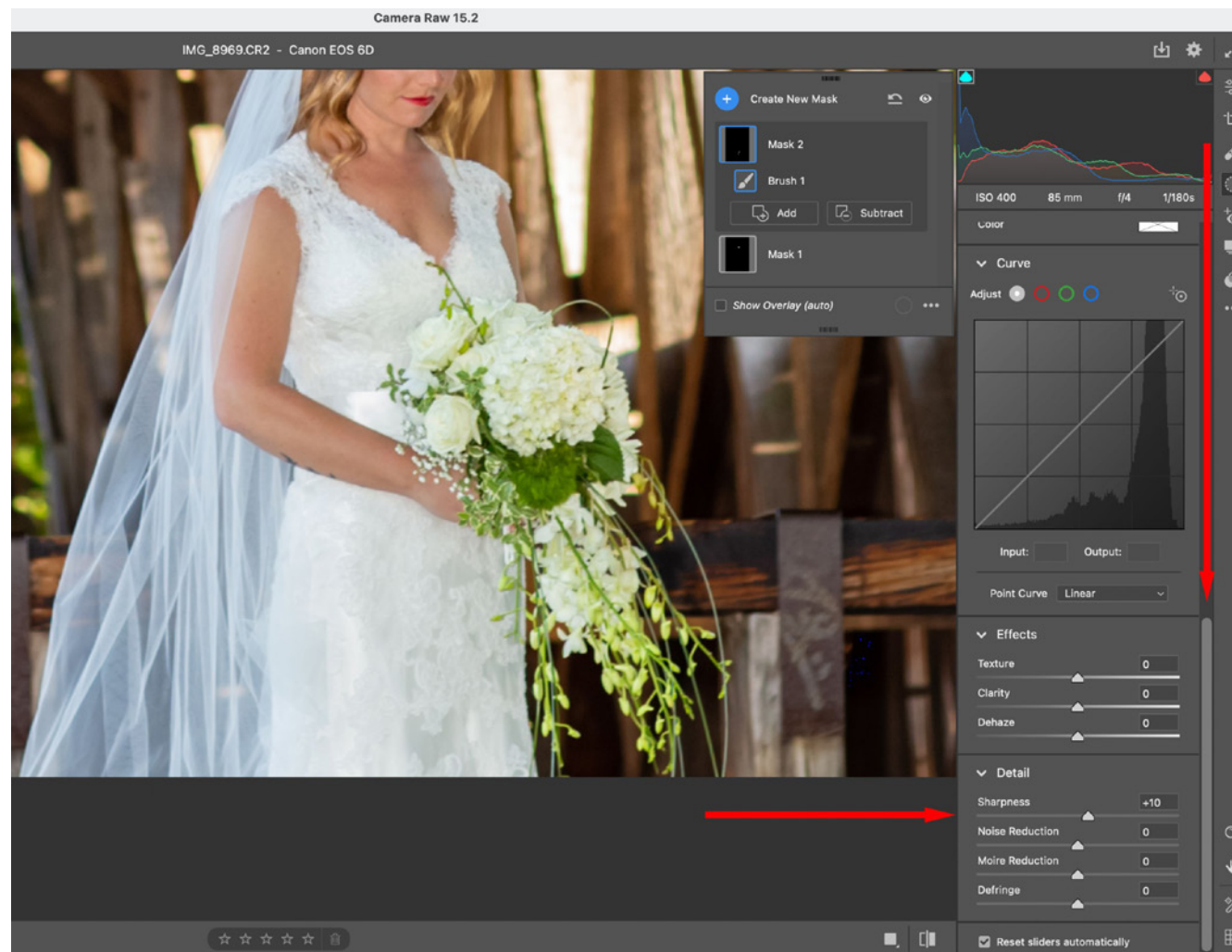
062 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

4. I reduced the Exposure slider to -0.15.

5. I reduced the Whites slider to -10.

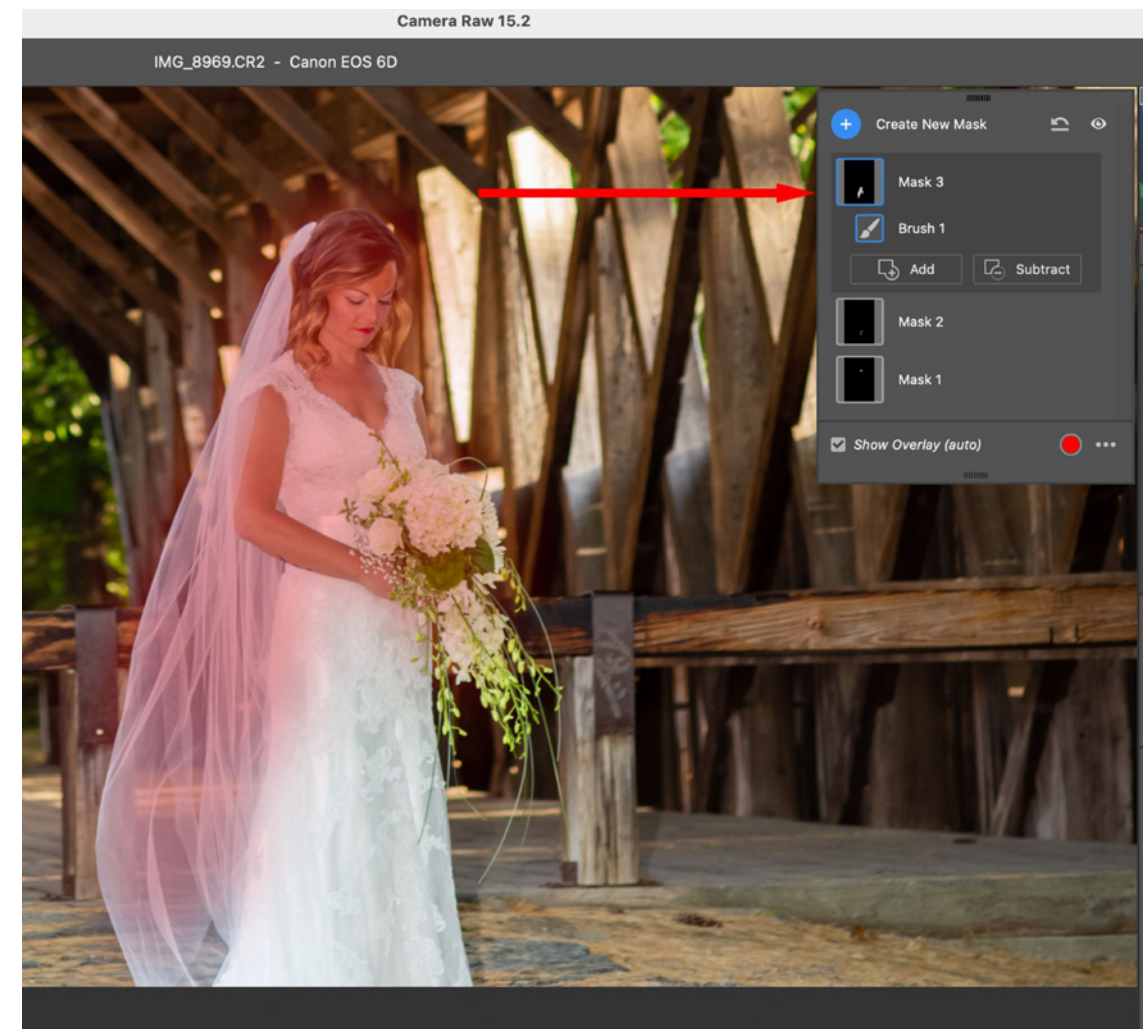
I want to bring those overexposed areas back onto the Histogram without making those areas look dingy gray.

Note: When editing for realism, remember that less is more.



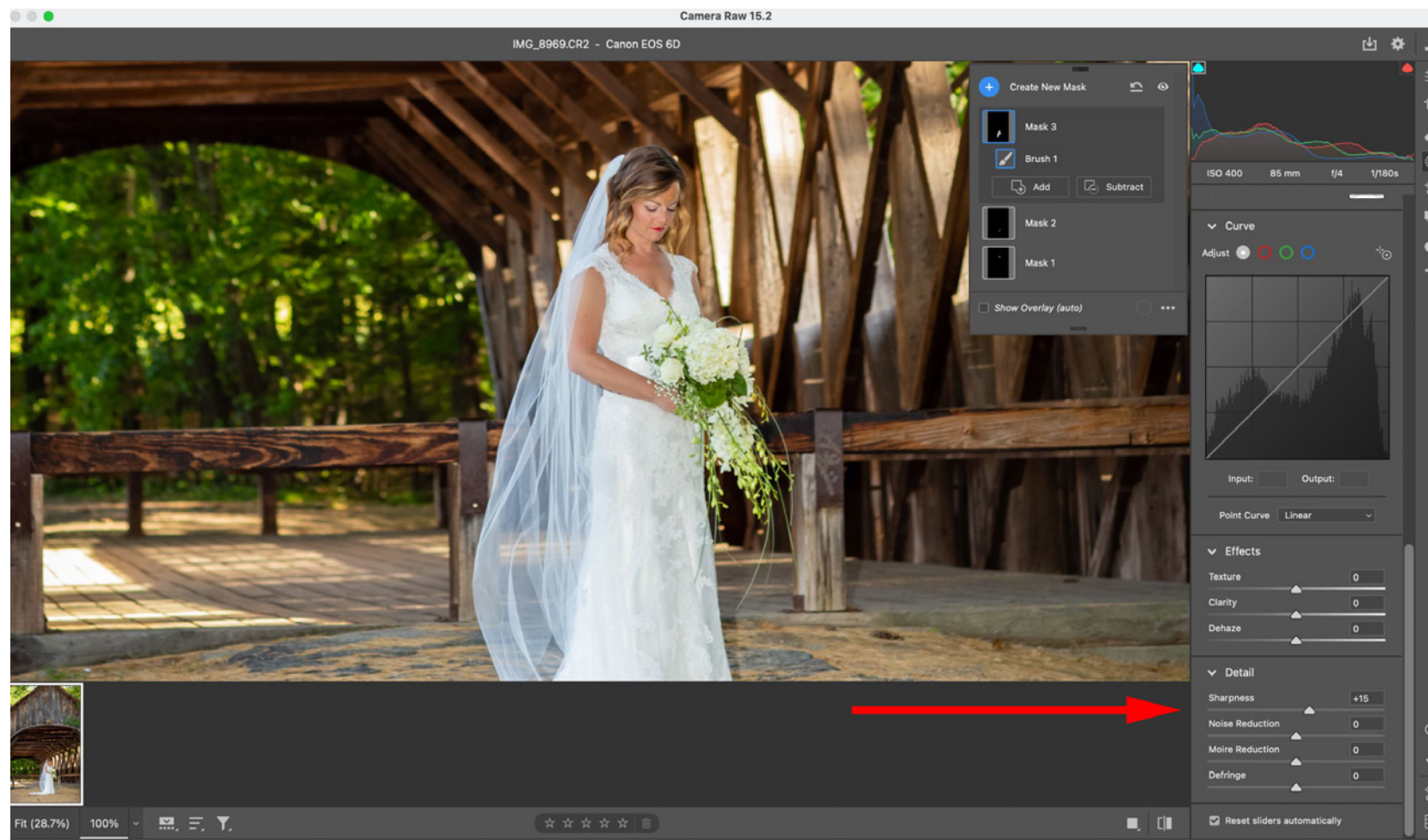
063 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

6. I moved the toolbox downward to get to the Sharpness slider and raised it to +10.



064 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

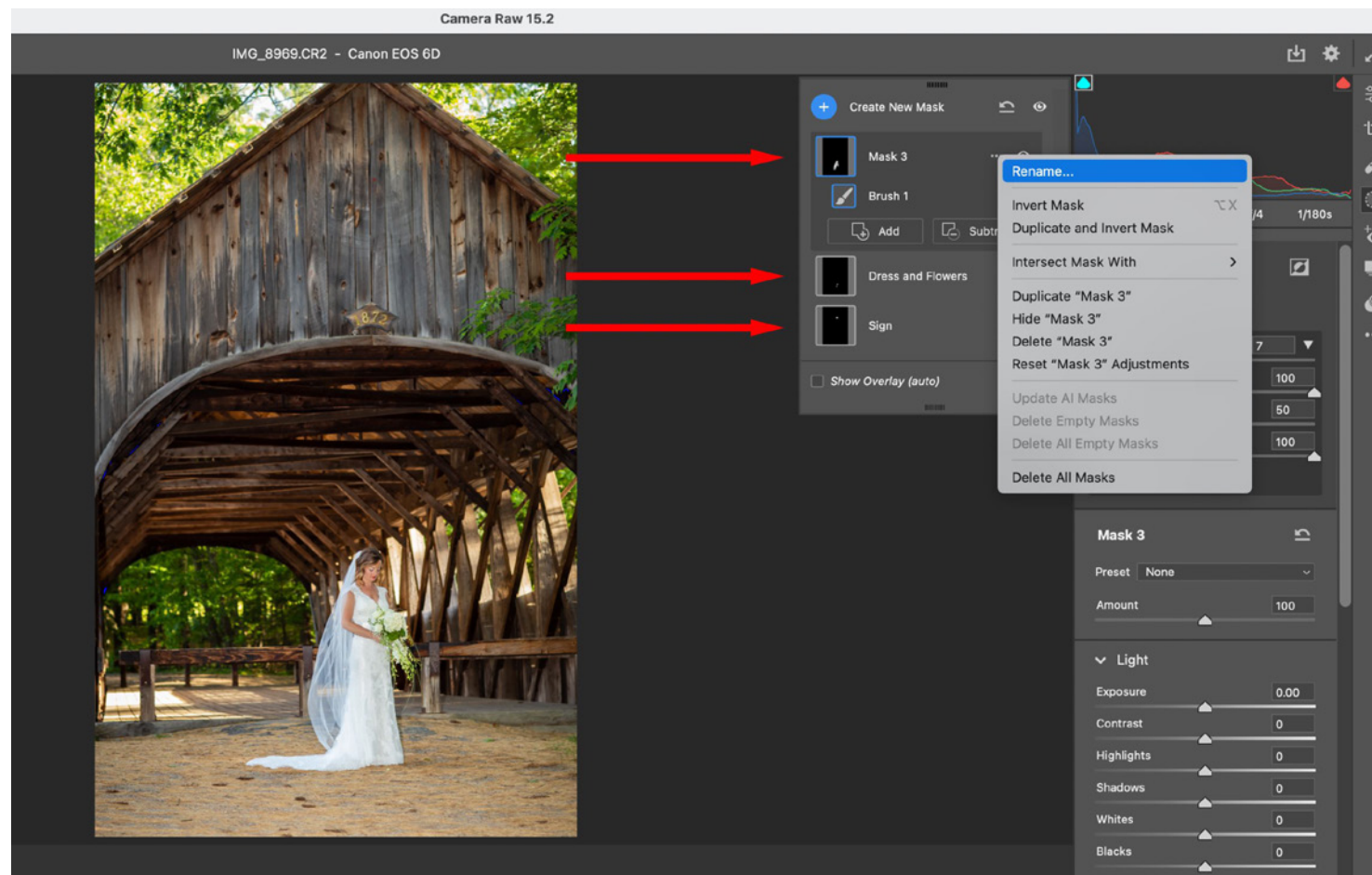
7. Click 'Create New Mask,' and now we have three masks.



065 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Reference 065 details our last edit with the Brush. We are now going to sharpen up the areas of the bride that we want to be the photograph's focal point. (Remember the tool of composition that we discussed earlier: Point-of-Focus.) I want you to notice that the Sharpness slider is set reasonably low. When using this technique, bear this in mind.

- You want to sharpen up the area; however, leave room for additional sharpening because we will apply a global sharpening adjustment at the end of the Fundamental Editing List.



066 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

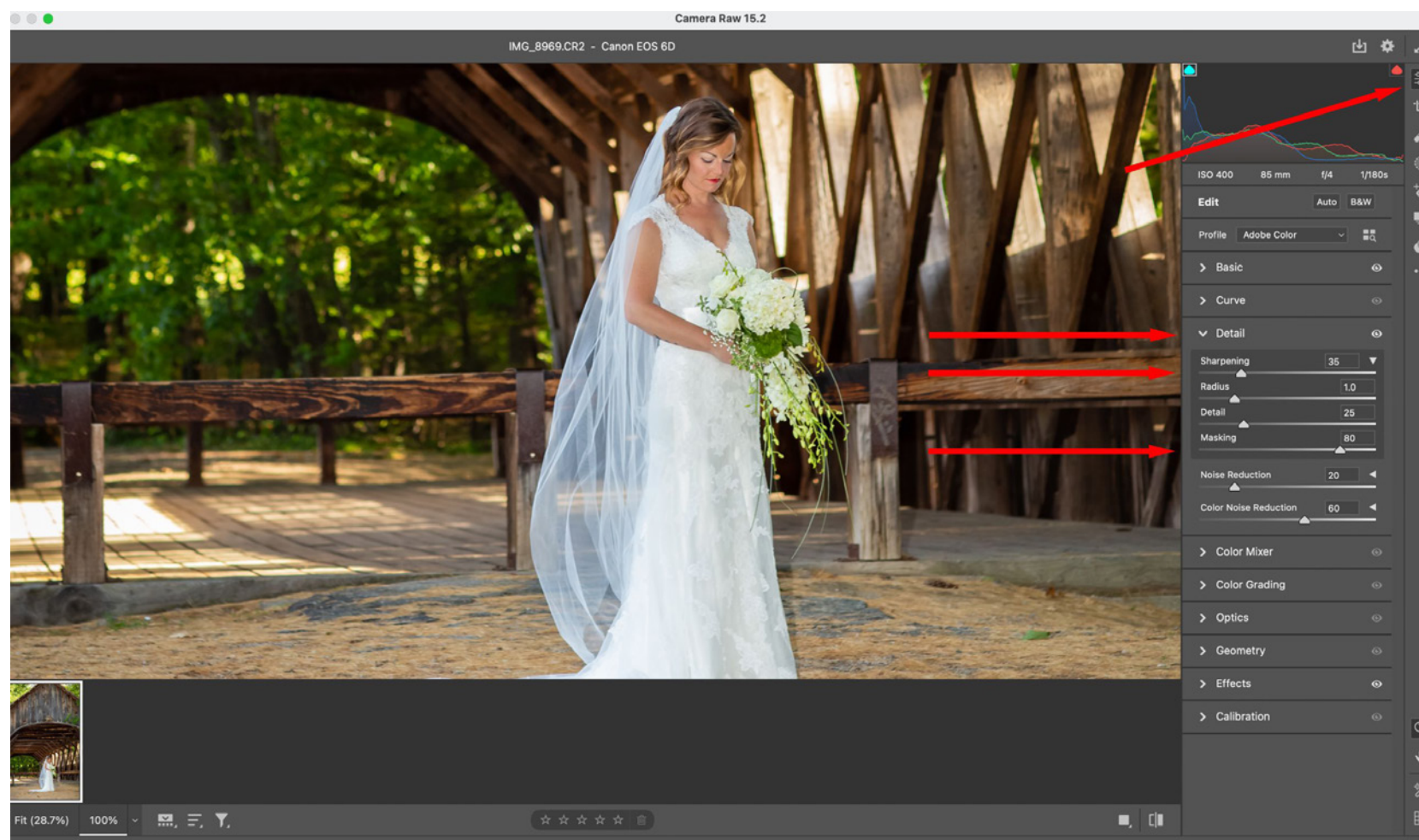
Key Lesson: When accumulating numerous masks, it can be challenging to remember which one is which. You can rename the masks by clicking the options button '...' on the right side of each mask box.

Step Fifteen – Sharpening

Sharpening is much like noise reduction; everyone has an opinion on how to do it and how much to do it. There are several truths (in Kent's opinion) about sharpening...

- All digital camera files require some sharpening to look their best. (At this point, anyway.)
- If you're not sure, err on the side of under-sharpening. Nothing makes a photograph look worse (or more amateur) than over-sharpening.
- There is no magic setting. If you're having a print made at a photo lab, the lab will sharpen the image. Only do very light sharpening for any file going to a printing lab.
- Do your sharpening in the Camera Raw Processing Window. It's the only place where you can completely undo the sharpening at any time. Don't do it within Photoshop. Don't do it in a plugin or app that claims they have the ultimate sharpening tool. Don't do it using a preset or action. Do it in the Camera Raw Processing Window, where you can reverse it later.

Sharpening in the Camera Raw Processing Window is easy, and there is a very cool trick that I'm going to show you!



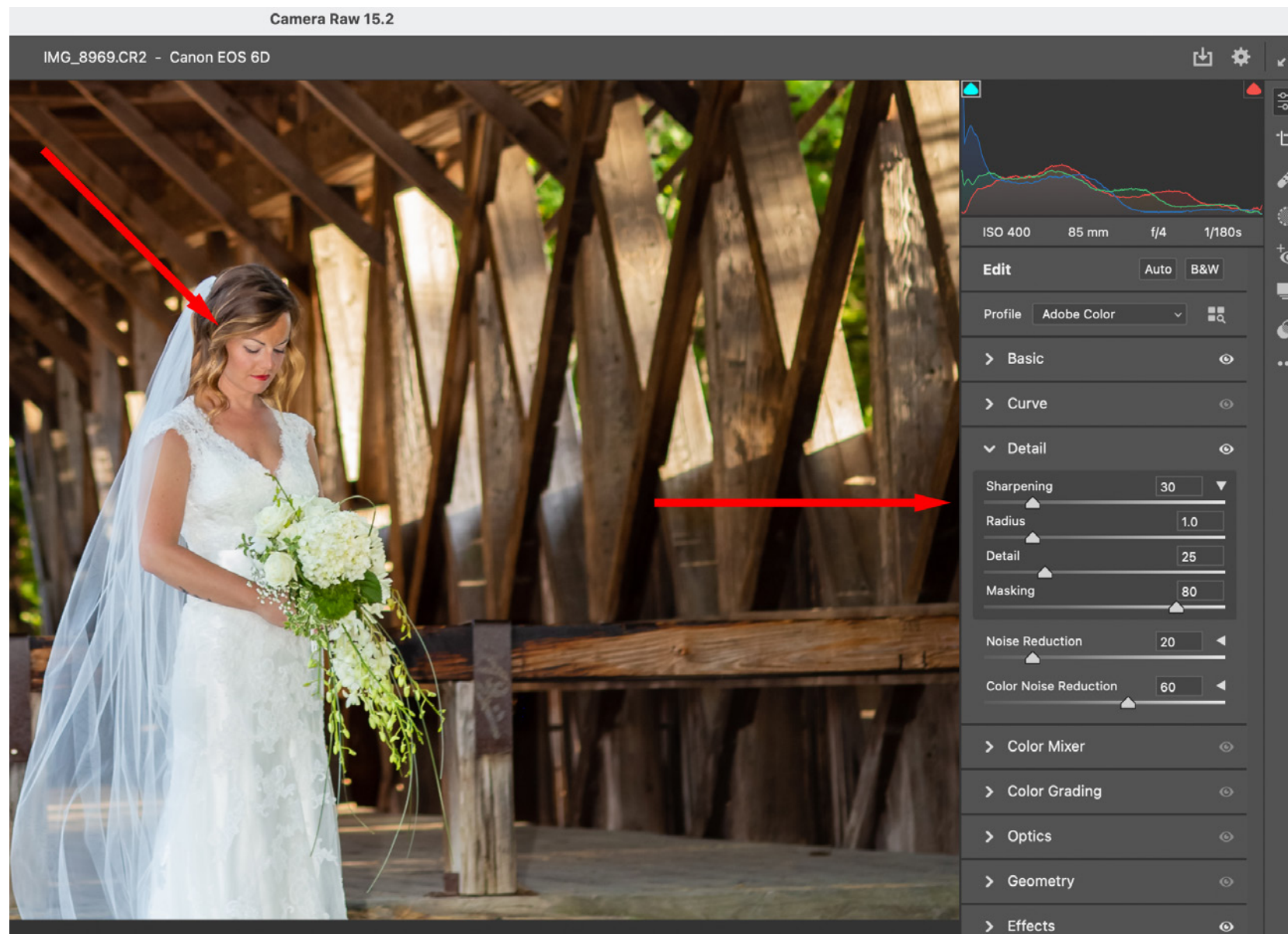
067 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

1. Set the magnification to 100% and position the main subject areas in the Preview window. Here is how I set up the bridal portrait.
2. Click the 'Edit' radio button in the upper-right corner.
3. Click the 'Detail' dropdown menu.
4. On the 'Sharpening' slider, click the left-facing arrow to reveal the 'Sharpening' options.
5. In my initial adjustment, I set the sharpening at 35. With a properly executed photograph, you should **never** have to set the global 'Sharpening' adjustment higher than 50. I rarely go higher than 40. Most of my sharpening adjustments are between 25 and 40. You cannot save a blurry picture with the Sharpening slider.
6. I set the Masking slider at 80. What is that? This is the nifty trick I was telling you about.



068 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Before you move the Masking slider, hold down the 'option' (Apple Computer) and then move the slider to the right. Image 069 shows you what you will see. This tool masks the sharpening effect to ONLY the white areas. This allows you to critically sharpen with fewer artifacts appearing in your image. The 'Sharpening' is only applied to the 'edges' of contrast where it will be most effective without creating artifacts. (If you're on a PC, hold down the alt and control keys.)

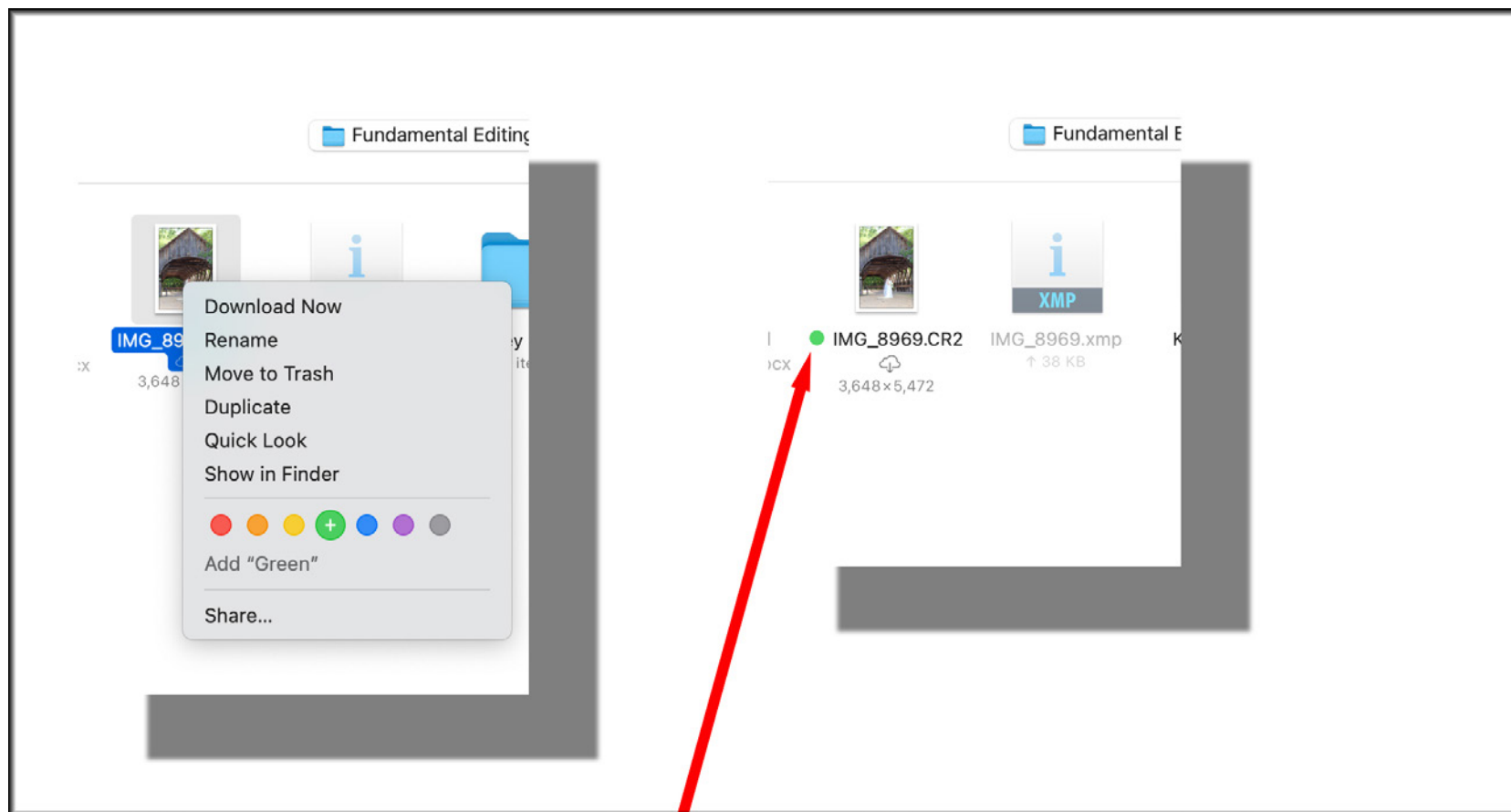


069 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

After applying your initial Sharpening and Masking, carefully examine where you applied the localized sharpening in Step Fourteen. In this case, I felt the bride was beginning to display some sharpening artifacts in the strands of her hair. I backed off the global Sharpening amount to 30.

THAT IS THE COMPLETION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL EDITING LIST IN PHOTOSHOP!

Before we look at our final photograph, I want to point out something that can be extremely helpful in the long term.



070 – Screenshots by Kent DuFault

When you're done editing for the day, do the following.

1. Close and save the file.
2. Navigate to that file and select it.
3. Right click.
4. Place a 'Tag' on the file to indicate where you are with it. I use Green to indicate a file that has been completely edited and is done. I use Blue to indicate a file I began working on but didn't complete. I use Red for files that I will not work on.

Okay, one more thing before we move on...



071 – Photograph and Graphics by Kent DuFault

I consider these dark areas at our bride's feet a composition problem. I don't want them there. There are two tools that I would use to remove them inside Photoshop: either the Healing tool or the Clone tool.

I'm not going to illustrate how to do that in this guide. I consider that to be an Advanced Edit, which is outside the Fundamental Editing List. I bring it up for this reason.

When I show you my finished photograph, you'll notice those spots are gone. I did that final step in Photoshop with the Clone tool.

Here is our before and after image using Photoshop for the Fundamental Editing List.



072 – Photograph and Editing by Kent DuFault

Self-Check Quiz

1. True or False: Clarity creates noise, especially in the mid-tones.
2. True or False: Vibrance determines the purity of a color.
3. True or False: A vignette is a useful tool of composition.
4. Why do we complete the Fundamental Editing List in the Camera Raw Processing Window?
5. True or False: If the vignette turns highlights gray, then there is nothing that you can do about it.
6. True or False: The Dehaze tool can provide an excellent enhancement to any photo.
7. True or False: The Brush tool creates masks.
8. True or False: In the Brush tool Navigation Masking box, the last mask created is at the top.
9. True or False: You should ALWAYS apply global sharpening before localized sharpening.
10. True or False: In the Preview window, a red mask created by the Brush tool indicates areas not affected by the edits.
11. True or False: Once you've made your changes in the Camera Raw Processing Window and saved your file, you'll easily be able to locate that file in the future.
12. When sharpening in the Camera Raw Processing Window, which keys should you hold down to apply masking and moving the Masking slider?

PHOTOSHOP USERS: PLEASE READ THE OTHER SECTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL SKILLS AND DETAILS!

04

LIGHTROOM

If you're a Lightroom user and skipped directly to this section, I want you to stop. Go back and read the Photoshop section.

I put a lot of information into that Photoshop section that will not be repeated here. I'm talking about the what, where, why, and how of the edits included in the Fundamental Editing List.

In the Lightroom section, I will simply show you how to physically do it.

Please go back and read the Photoshop section before continuing.

Step One – Importing (Opening) the Image

Most of you will likely be Lightroom users, as it seems very popular, especially with folks who have come to photography in the last ten to twelve years.

While I own the program, it's not my favorite, and the reason is simple.

I began with Photoshop back in 1993. Long ago, I developed my own file organization system, and that's what I don't like about Lightroom. It was initially designed to be (primarily) a file organization tool (a database, if you will) and the editing component was secondary.

However, recent iterations of the program have brought it up to Photoshop's standards, with the exception that it does not have layering capabilities.

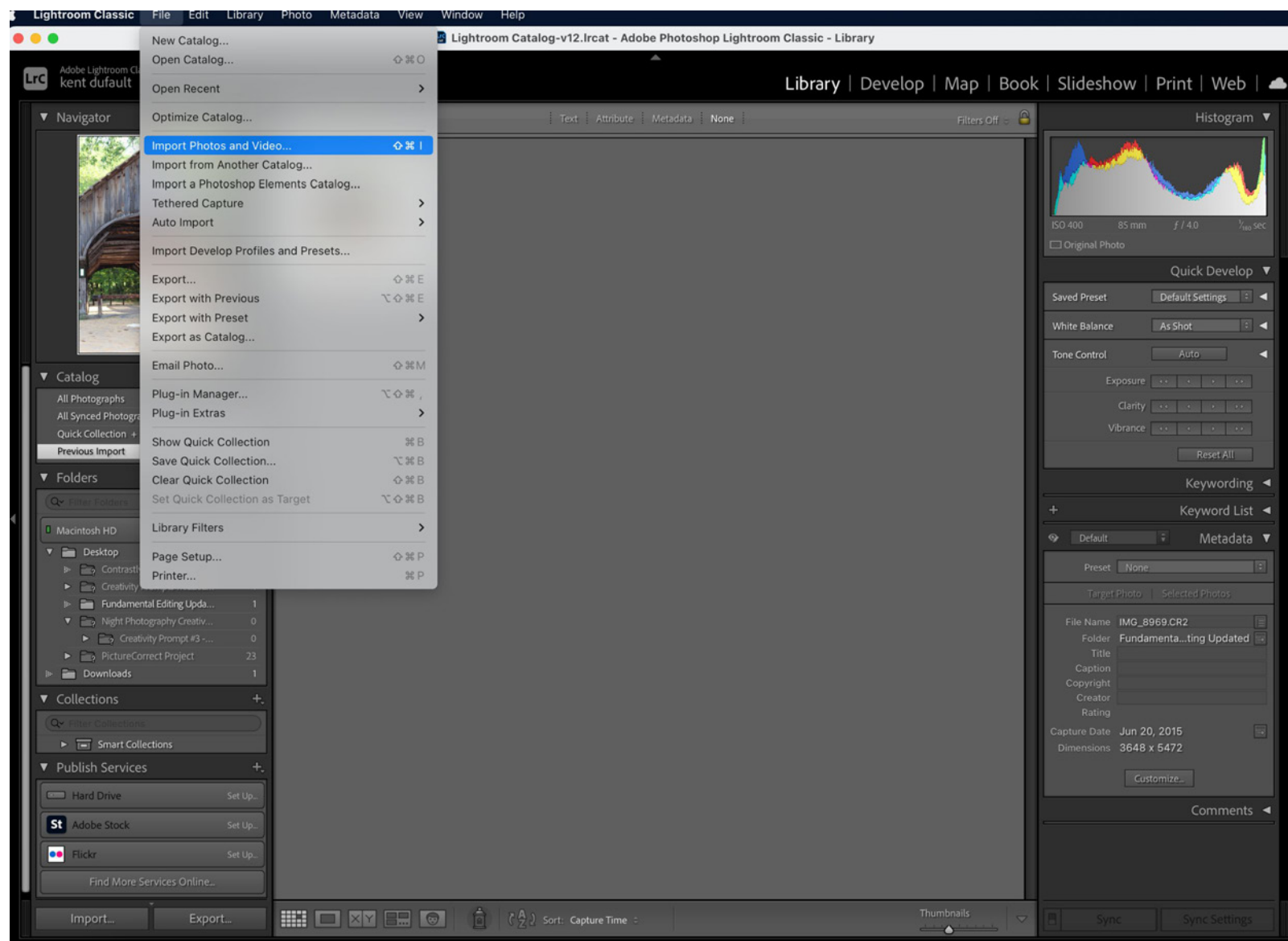
And in an added bit of confusion, Adobe has two versions of Lightroom. There is Lightroom Classic and Lightroom CC.

I'm not sure which version is more widely used, but the consensus seems to be that if you know how to accomplish things in Lightroom Classic, you will have no problem using Lightroom CC.

Therefore, I will use Lightroom Classic to demonstrate this guide's Lightroom portion.

Now, please don't go sending me a bunch of emails telling me how wrong I am. What I stated in the previous couple of paragraphs is a historical fact. Over the years, Lightroom has evolved into a sound editing suite as well. I still prefer Photoshop.

Now that we have that out of the way, let's talk about 'Importing' (opening) an image file. Oops, wait a minute... in Lightroom, you don't 'Open' an image file from a folder on your computer. You import it into a 'Catalog,' and from there you can select it to do 'Development' on the image.



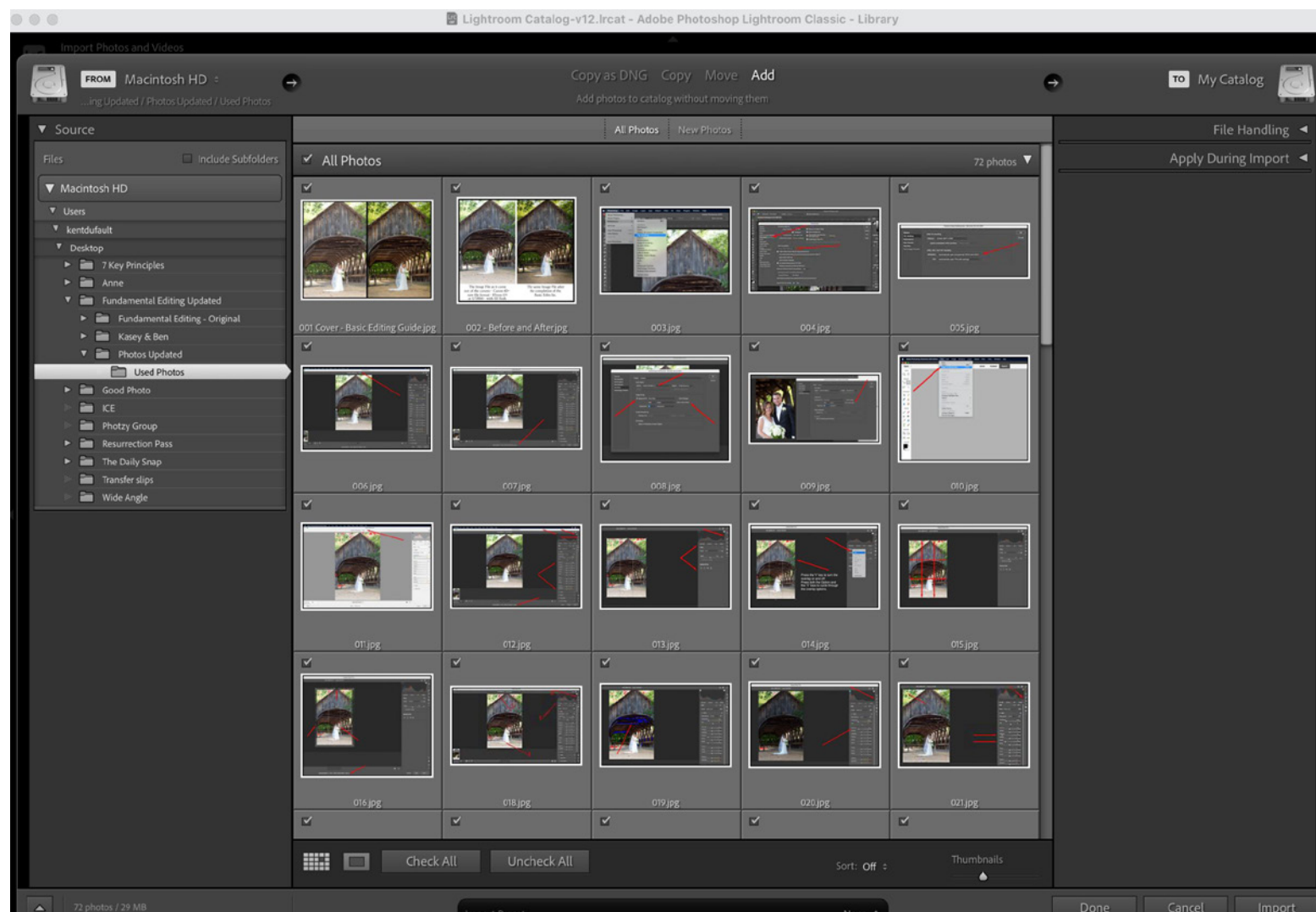
073 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Unlike Photoshop, Lightroom stores the changes made to any file in any format so you can reset your file back to its original condition at any time. (I do like that aspect of Lightroom.)

What this means is that there isn't any Camera Raw Processing Window per se. However, the effect is the same.

Most of you Lightroom users probably know this, but just in case we have some real newbies...

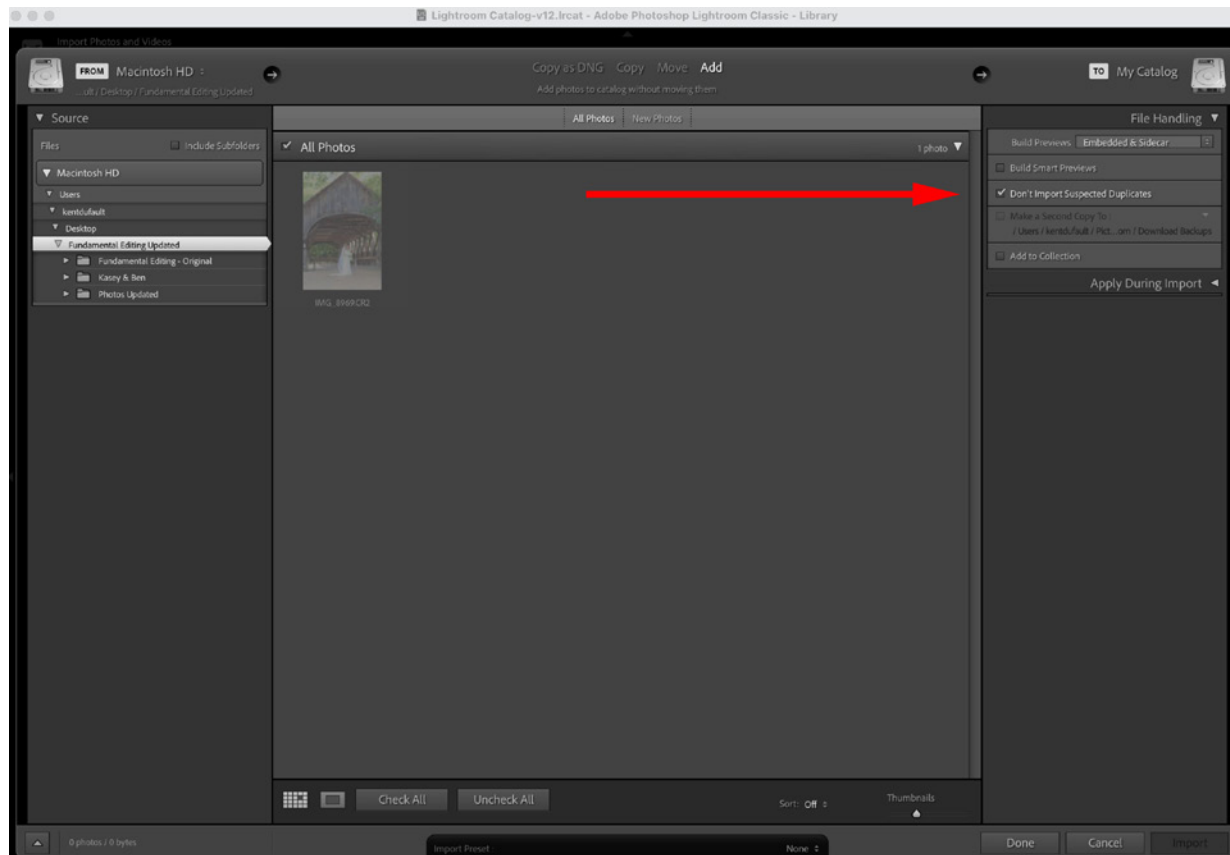
To get your image file into Lightroom, click the 'File' dropdown menu and select 'Import Photos and Video.'



074 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

This will take you to a new window with a Navigation tree on the left-hand side. You will navigate to the folder where your picture file is. When you click on that folder, all the images within that folder will appear on the right. Here are a couple of side notes.

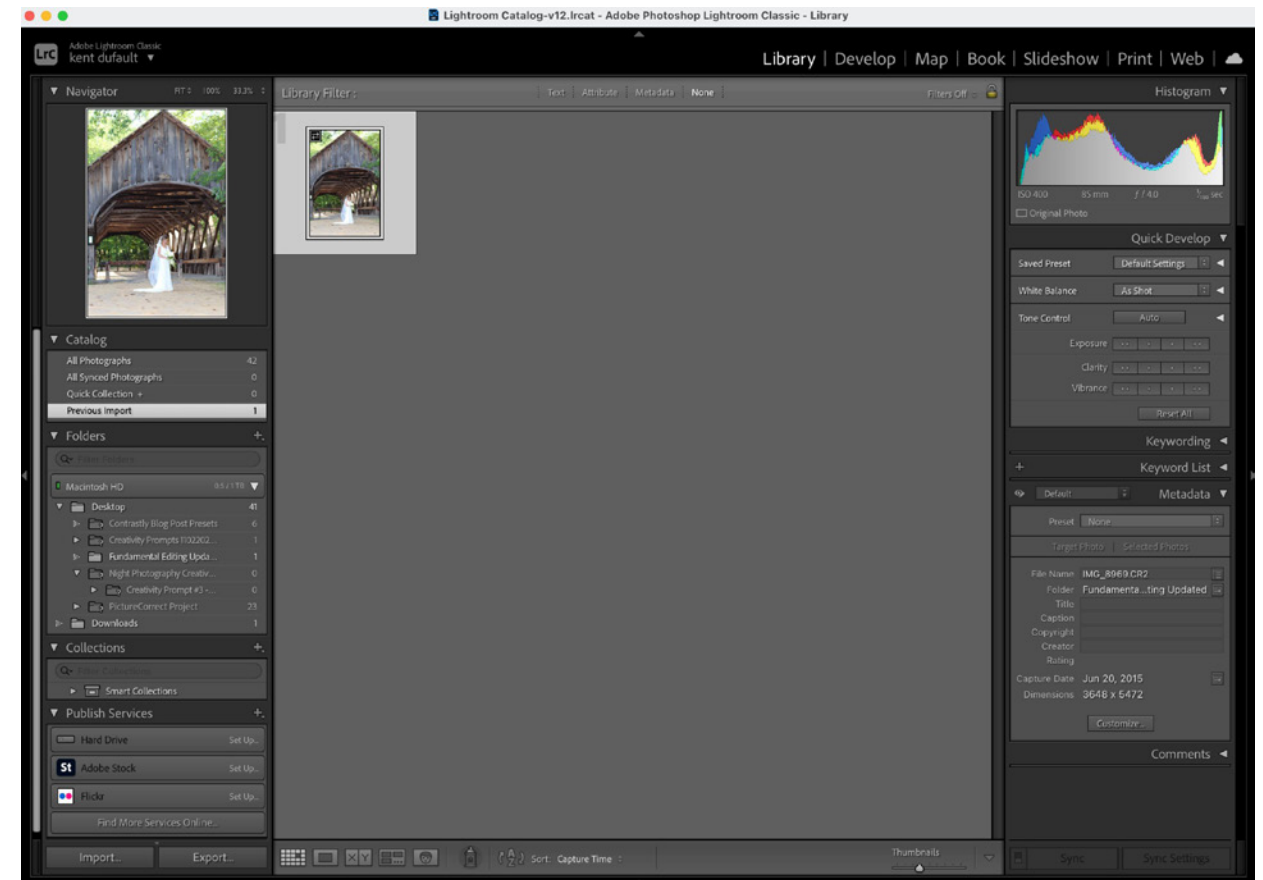
- By default, it will have all of the photos in that folder checked. If you don't want to import all the pictures, you must uncheck the ones you don't want. In this case, I don't want to import all the photos; I only want one. So, I clicked 'Uncheck All.' I then selected the file that I wanted.
- Suppose you've ever imported the file you're looking for into Lightroom at a previous time in history. In that case, it will not highlight that file to be imported again (unless you unchecked this option in the preferences, which most Lightroom users would probably recommend against, I'm guessing).
- Lightroom micromanages the handling and storage of the image files that you import. DO NOT move the files outside of Lightroom, or you will corrupt the 'Catalog' and lose one, if not multiple, image files along with the edits you had done on them.



075 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Reference 075 shows where the preference setting is located for importing a duplicate image. It defaults to 'Don't Import Suspected Duplicates.'

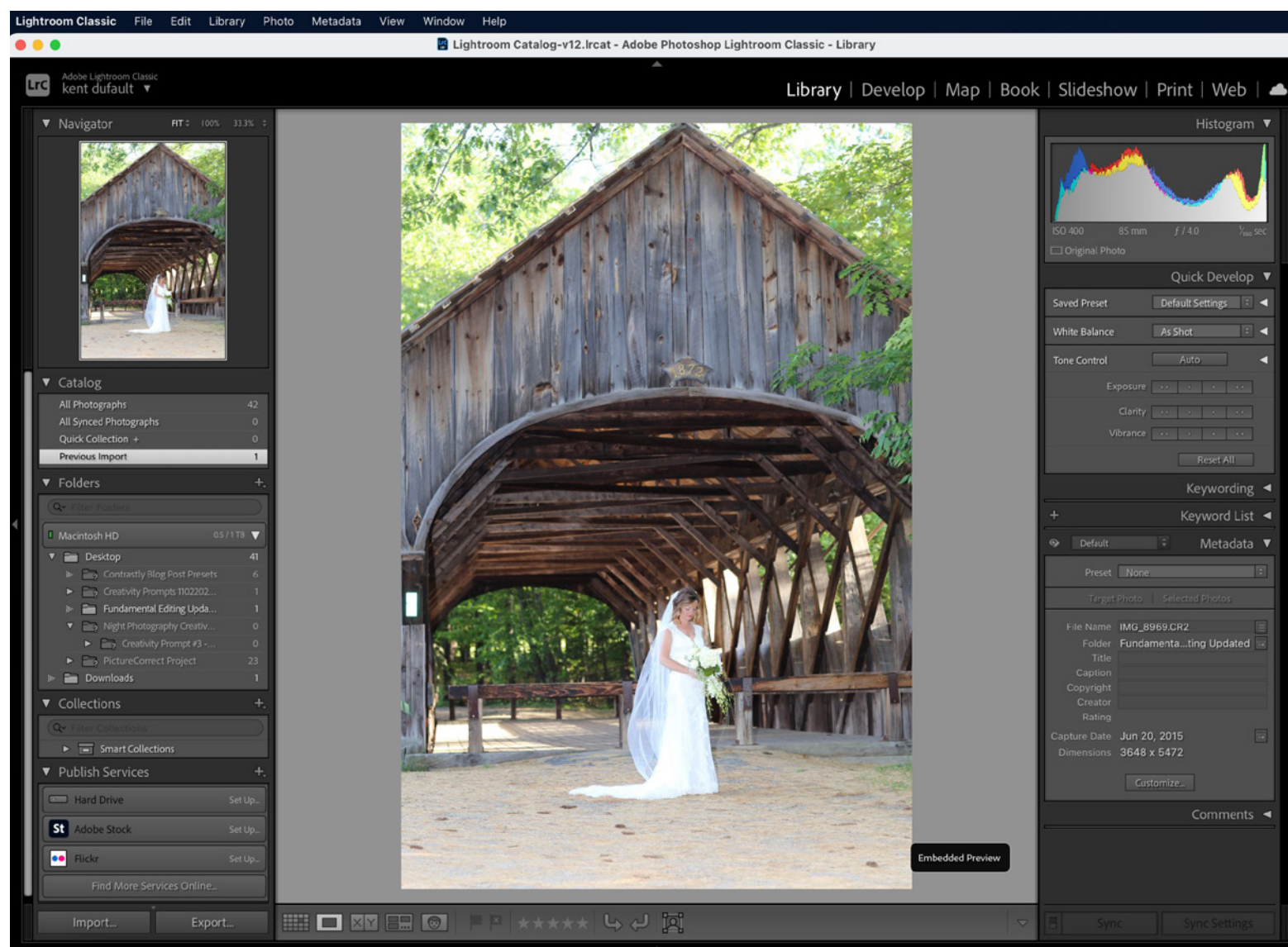
After selecting the correct image file(s), click the 'Import' button.



076 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Your selected photo(s) will appear in the 'Library module'. For this guide we will just refer to this single image from here on out.

In Reference 076, the thumbnail in the upper left of the Preview window illustrates the preview image size that will appear by default.



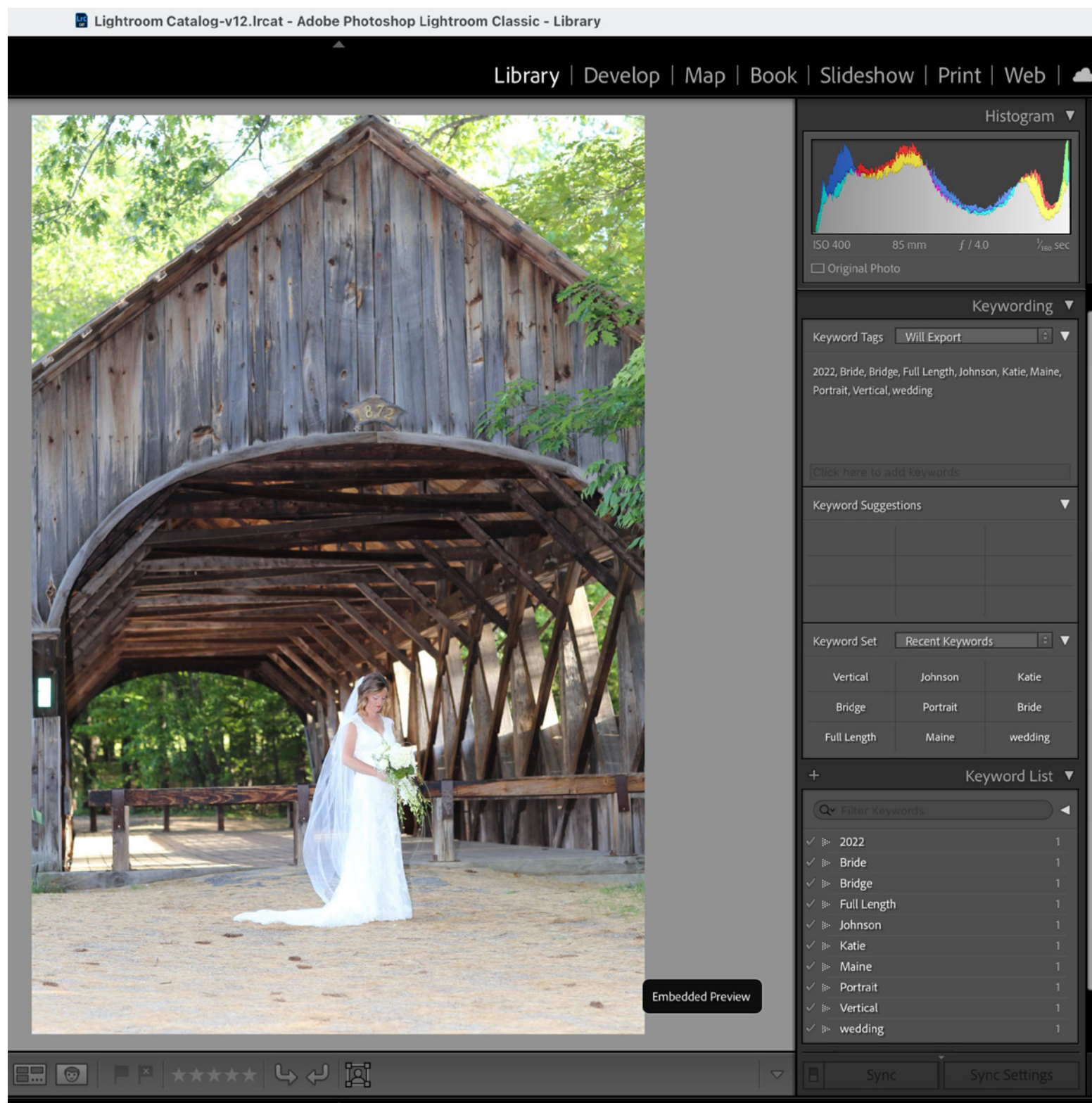
077 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

If you double-click that preview thumbnail, it will give you a larger preview image that is centered in the preview window, as shown in Reference 077.

Note: There are several ways to go about the import process as well as sizing the Preview image. I'm not going to cover the options here. It's easy to sort out if you play with the program for a bit.

On the right side of the workspace, you will find a Histogram and five dropdown menus.

- Quick Develop – I don't recommend using this method for developing your photos.
- Keywording – This is very important. Let me repeat that. This is very important. Since you cannot move your images outside of Lightroom without corrupting your Catalog, you need a method of finding them within Lightroom. And that method is 'Keywording.'
- Keyword List – Lightroom maintains a list of the keywords that you enter.
- Metadata – Information imported with the camera file.

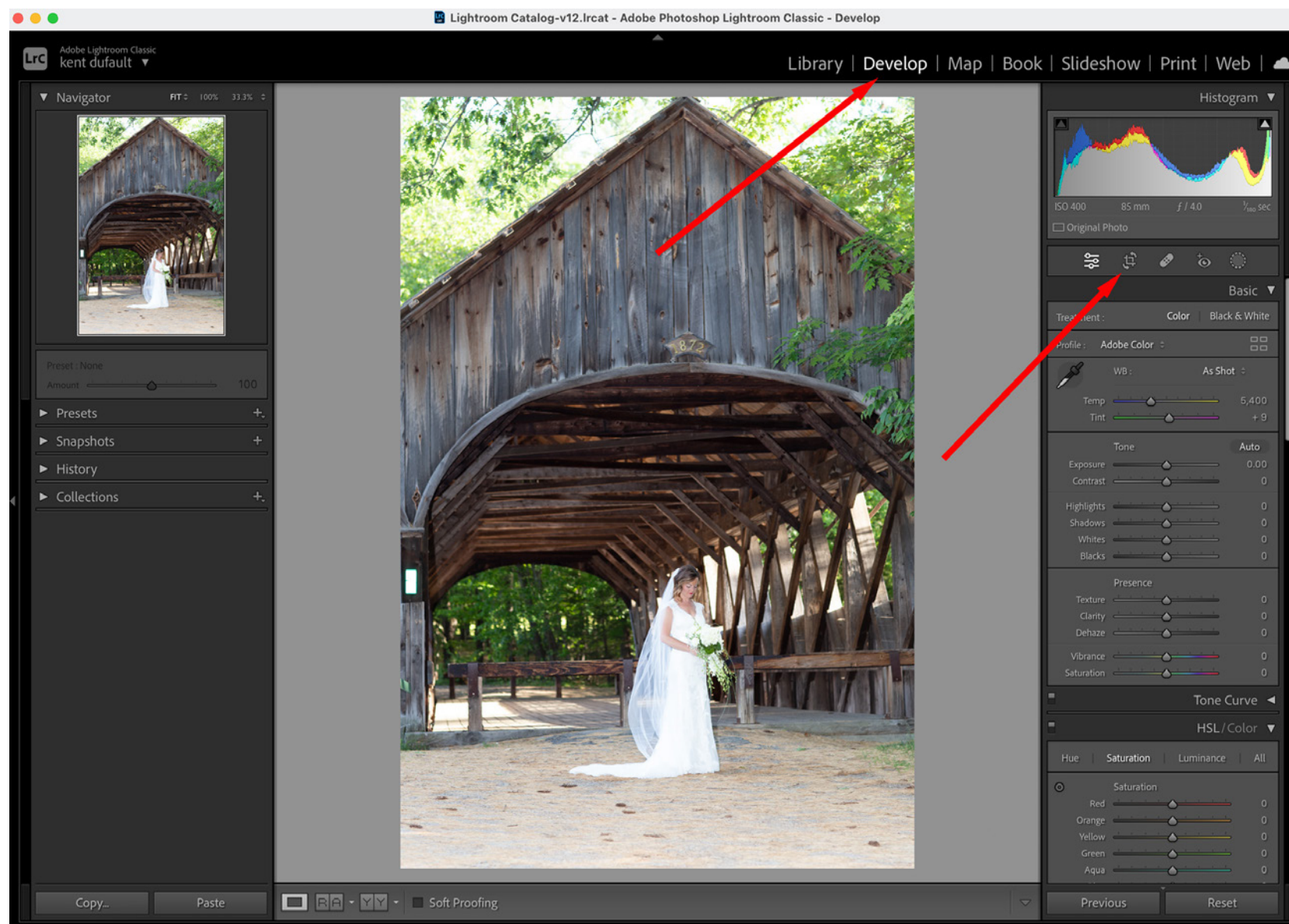


078 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Since I do not recommend using Quick Development, we won't use it for this guide.

The Keywording component of Lightroom is crucial. As I mentioned earlier, Lightroom was initially intended to be a database management software. It has numerous tools for 'marking' your image files with information so that you can locate them later. We are not going to get into that too deeply here.

Notice that I did enter some keywords. I could now do a search within the Lightroom Keyword List to help me locate my picture file.



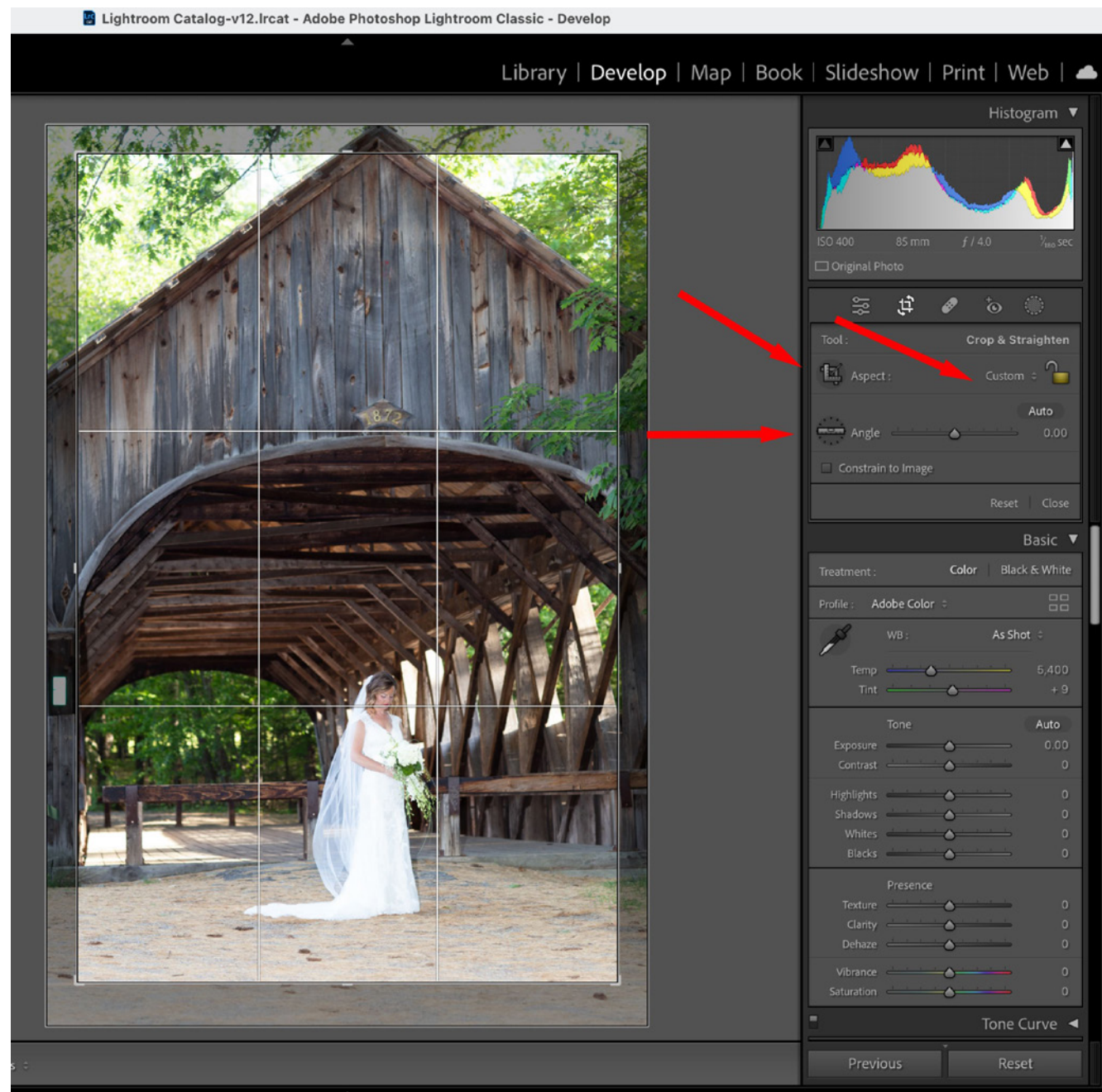
079 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Step Two – Crop the Image

After selecting, importing, and keywording our bridal portrait, we must move to the 'Develop' module by clicking the 'Develop' button. In Reference 079, the upper arrow points to the 'Develop' button, and the lower arrow points to the 'Crop' tool, which is located in the 'Tool Bar' below the Histogram.

Notice that the Toolbar contains the same icons as we saw in the Photoshop section. The only difference is that they are held in a horizontal Toolbox bar instead of a vertical one.

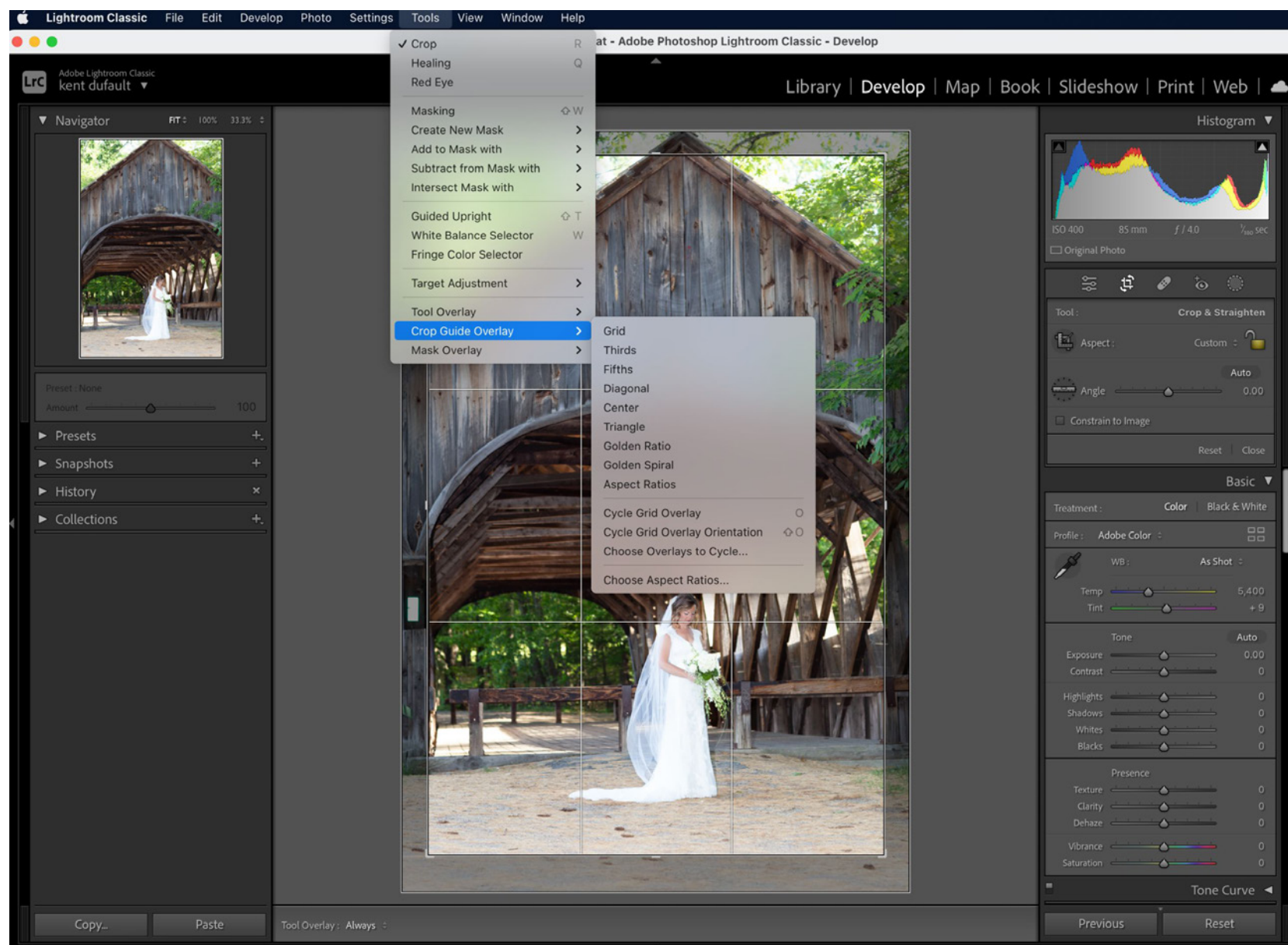
We will step through our Fundamental Editing List in precisely the same order as we did in the Photoshop section of this guide, and all the edits will happen in the 'Develop' module.



080 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Once you click the Crop tool, a new toolbox will appear below it. Let's look at what's inside that toolbox.

- If you click to the left of the word 'Aspect,' your cursor will look like a crop tool or a set of arrows. The crop tool crops the image. The arrows icon will allow you to change the angle of the picture. This is redundant as just below, there is a better way to change the pitch. I always leave it set to the crop tool.
- Clicking on the word 'Original' will give you a pop-up menu displaying different aspect ratios to crop the image. If you're unsure what that means, go back and read the Photoshop section of this guide.
- For our bridal portrait, we will select 'Custom' and crop it to the same image size and ratio that we did in the Photoshop section.
- If the Lock icon is closed, it will constrain the crop to whatever ratio you choose. If the Lock is open, it will NOT constrain the ratio.
- The 'Angle' slider does just what it says. It angles the photo within the crop. This would often be used to straighten horizon lines. If you click 'Auto,' Lightroom will attempt to straighten the image independently. I'm not a big fan of auto anything.
- I've never used 'Constrain to Image.' Honestly, I wouldn't mess with it, unless you enjoy making things difficult. In the Fundamental Editing List, this does nothing for us.

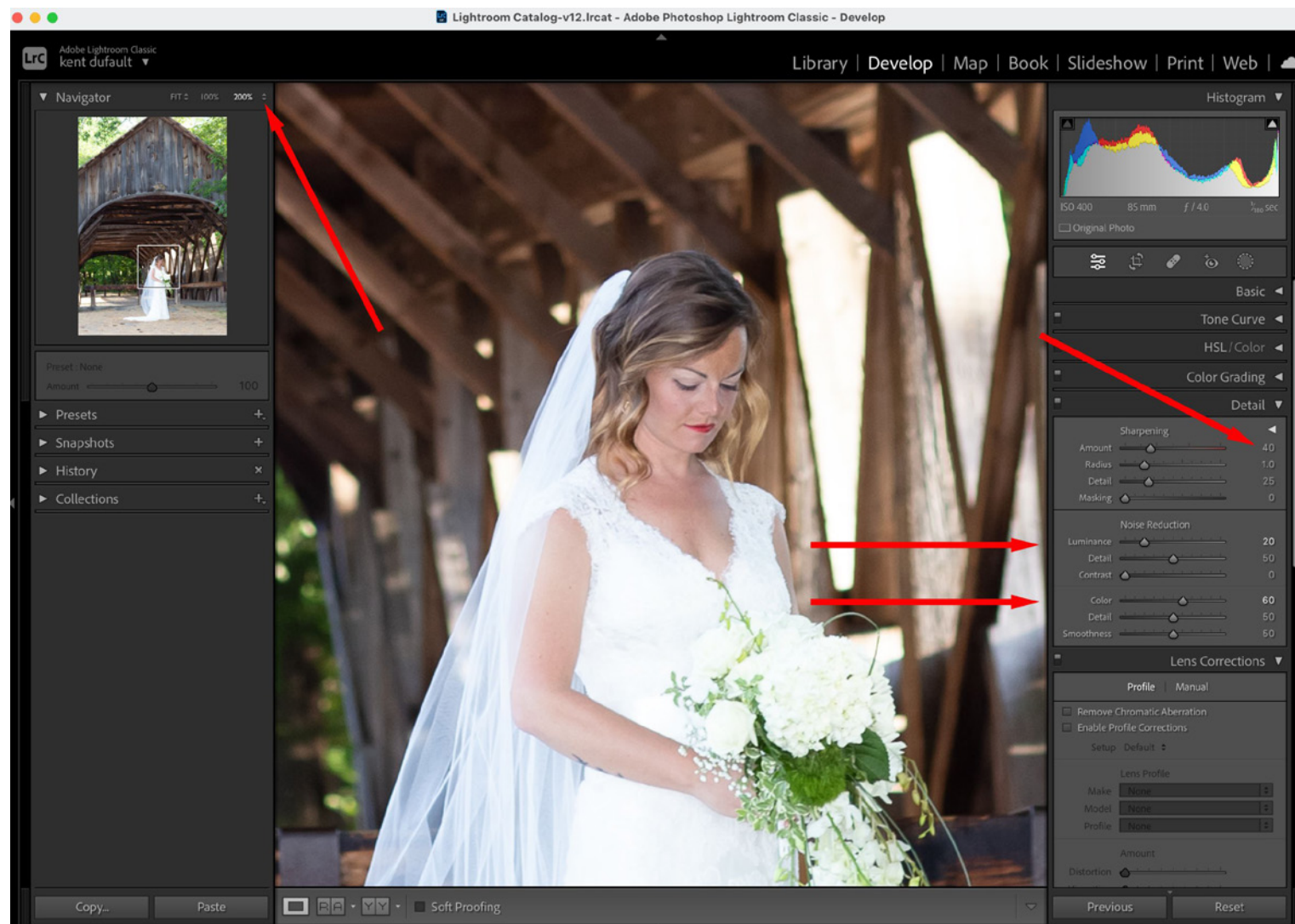


081 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In the Photoshop section, I covered the use of crop overlays. I ALWAYS use these. The overlay options are a superb tool for helping you judge your composition. Reference 081 shows where you can access the overlay options in Lightroom. If you're not seeing them, click on the 'Tool Overlay' option and select 'Always Show' or 'Auto Show.' I have mine set to 'Always Show.'

Key Lesson: You can quickly cycle through all the various overlay options by pressing the 'o' key.

After we are satisfied with our cropping, we can click the Crop tool again to close the Cropping tool options box.



082 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Step Three – Noise Reduction

To get to the 'Noise Reduction' component within Lightroom, scroll down the toolbox on the right of the screen until you see 'Detail.' Click the triangular box next to the word 'Detail.'


Two boxes will open a Sharpening box and a Noise Reduction box.


Right now, we are only interested in the noise reduction feature.

By default, your image will open in the Develop module at the 'Fit' setting, which shows the entire picture. For noise reduction (and sharpening), we always want to view the image at 200%. Move your cursor over to the 'Navigator' window, which is located on the upper left. You will see two small arrows pointing up and down on the upper-right side of the Navigator window. Click on them and set your Preview image to 200%. Center the bride in the Preview window.

As previously determined, our 'Luminance' (tone) noise reduction will be set to 20, and the 'Color' (chromatic) noise slider will be set to 60. I rarely need to fuss with the other sliders in this toolbox. Feel free to play with them. I like to keep things simple.

After noise reduction, return the Sharpening slider to 0.

 **Key Lesson:** If you wish to quickly toggle back and forth between the 'Fit' view and the '200%' view, press the 'z' key on your keyboard.

 **Important:** The Sharpening slider defaults to a setting of 40, which will help us to see the noise. But we want complete control of the sharpening function as we work through the Fundamental Editing List. Reset this slider to 0.

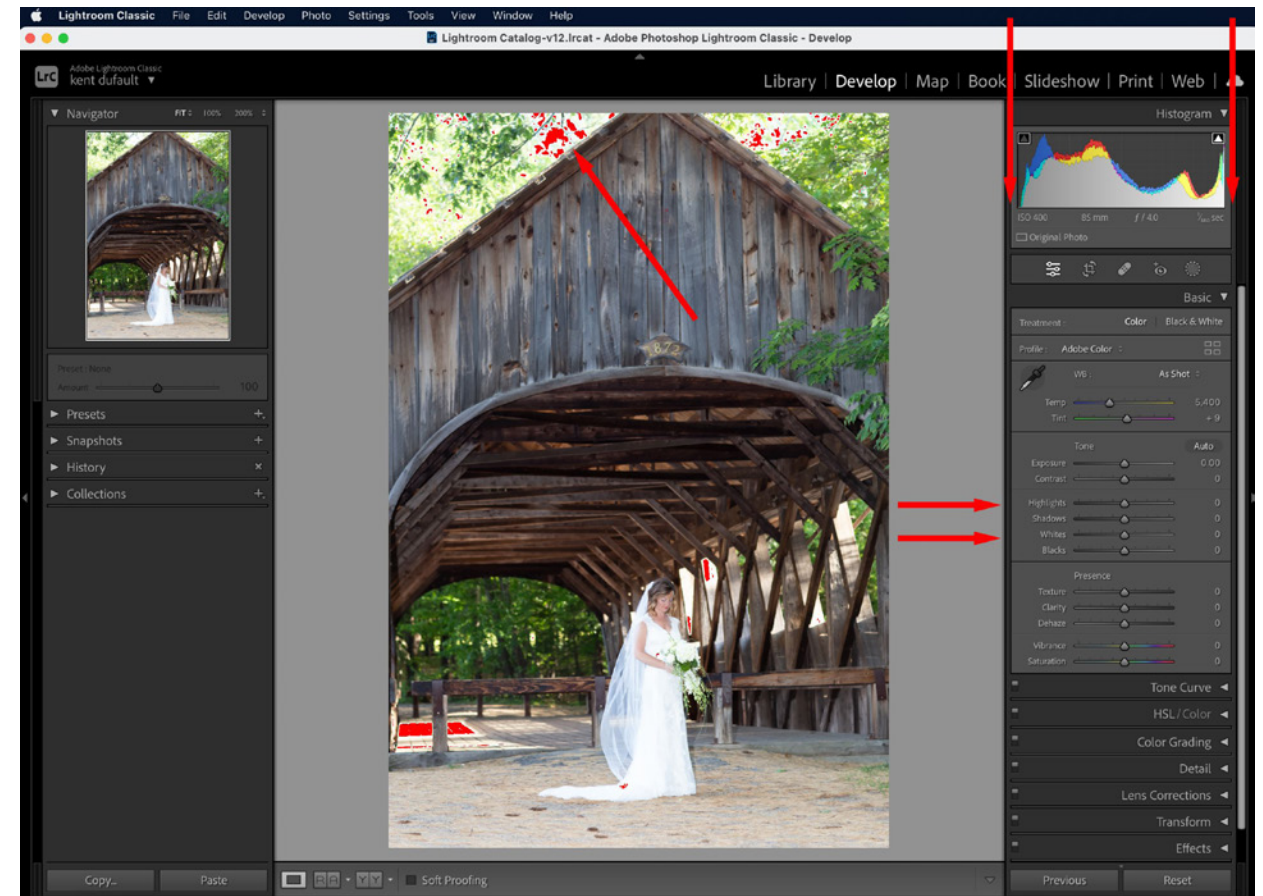
Note: If you want more information on the topic of noise reduction, go to the Photoshop section and read the noise reduction steps. I went into more depth there on what noise is, how to see it, and working with the settings.

Steps Four, Five, & Six – Global Exposure Adjustment, Clipping, and Setting the Black Point and White Point

In the Photoshop section, I dug pretty deep into the 'how' and 'why' of exposure adjustment and the **importance** of the Histogram. If you skipped that section, I suggest that you go back and read it.

The Histogram is your best friend. You need to learn as much about it as possible.

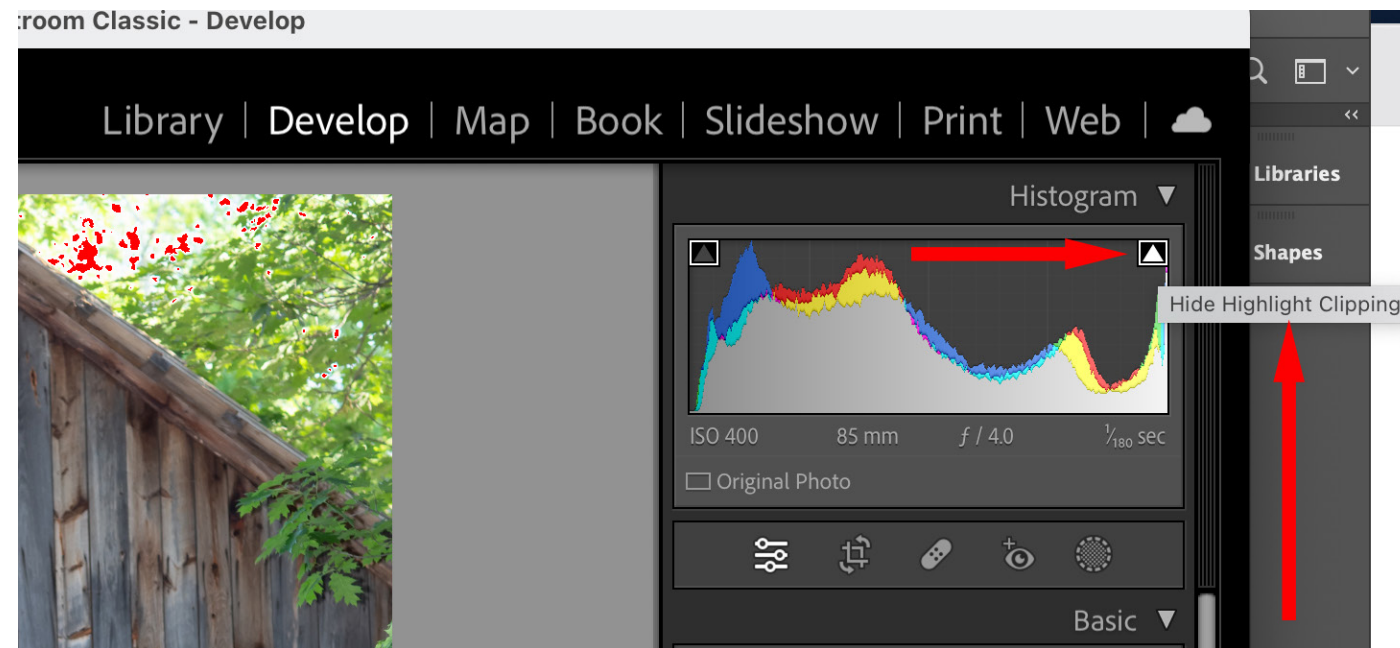
You will first notice in Reference 083 that I have returned the Preview to 'Fit.' For this step, I want to see the entire image. In any exposure adjustment, particularly a global adjustment, the



083 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

first step is to evaluate the Histogram located in the upper-right side of the workspace.

I always begin by ensuring the Clipping indicators are turned on. The buttons to turn the Clipping indicators on and off are the small triangles at the top of the Histogram. When they're on, they will have a white box around them. If clipping occurs, it will appear as a mask on the preview. As you can see, there is highlight clipping in the sky and in the background.



084 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

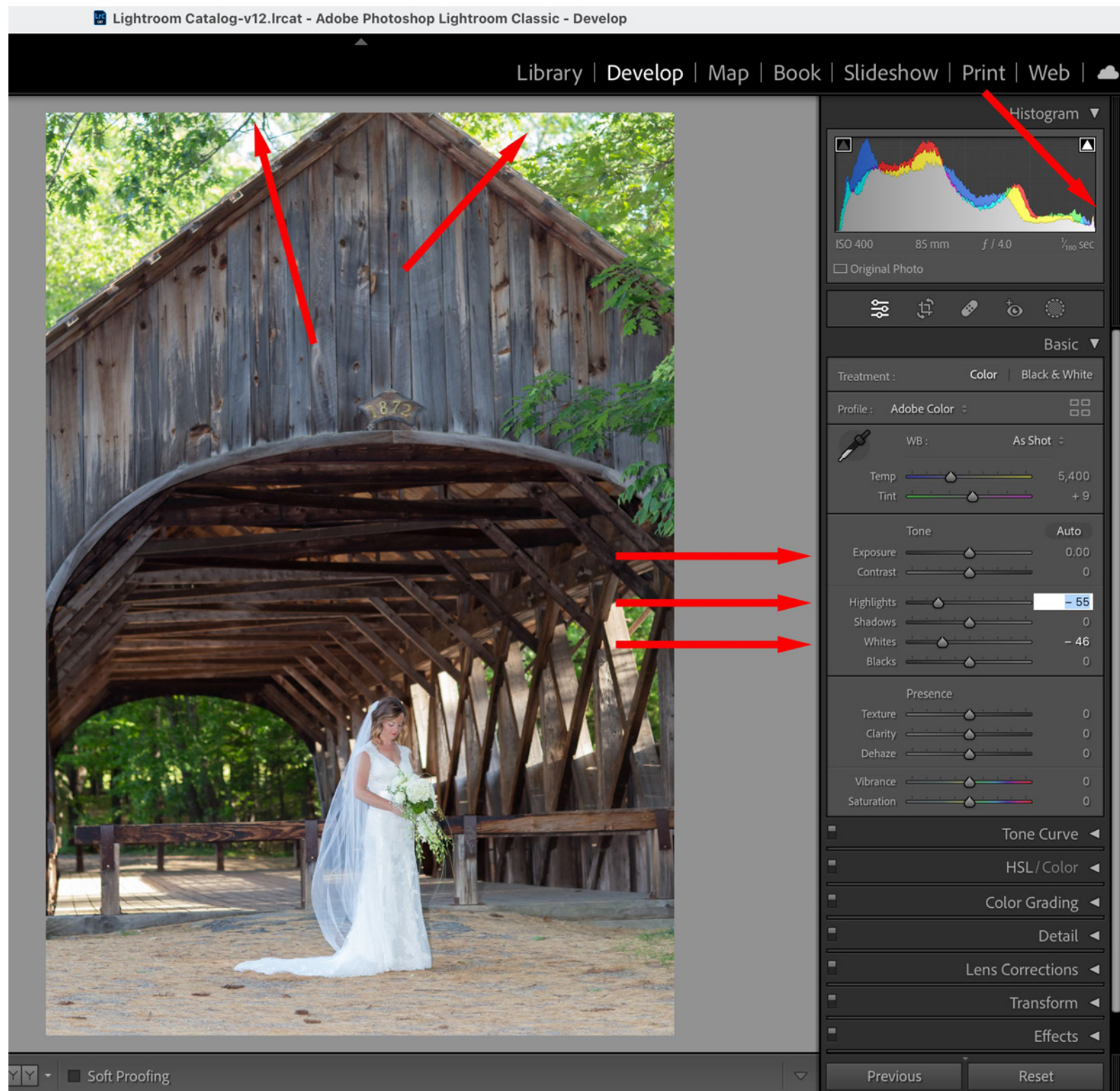
⚠ Important Note: There has been much confusion online about what tones are mapped out where on the Histogram, and I'll show you why. (A big part of the problem starts with Adobe.) Many people believe that the far right of the Histogram represents the Whites and the Highlights are the upper third of the Histogram. This is wrong. The Highlights are on the far right, and the Whites are on the upper third. You can satisfy yourself with the correct answer by hovering your cursor over the Clipping indicator on the right. A pop-up window says 'Highlight Clipping (on or off)' and not 'Whites Clipping (on or off).' This is labeled this way because the far right of the Histogram is the Highlights and **not** the Whites. To further complicate things, Adobe labeled the left Clipping Indicator as Shadows Clipping. But this is incorrect. It should be Blacks Clipping. You can answer this for yourself by sliding the Blacks slider to the left. What happens? The Clipping indicator and the Blue mask over the Preview image light up. Reset that to 0. Now, slide the Shadows

slider ALL the way to the left. What happens? Nothing gets clipped! The Shadows slider only affects the dark tones on the lower third of the Histogram but not the darkest blacks. **So put this in your head.** The Histogram is divided like this:

1. Far left is the blacks
2. Left third is the shadows
3. Right third is the whites
4. Far right is the highlights

If you get that much out of this guide, you will already be ahead of many of your peers.

Next, we examine the Histogram overall. We can see that this image is pretty well exposed with a full range of tones. The only problem indicated is on the highlight end.

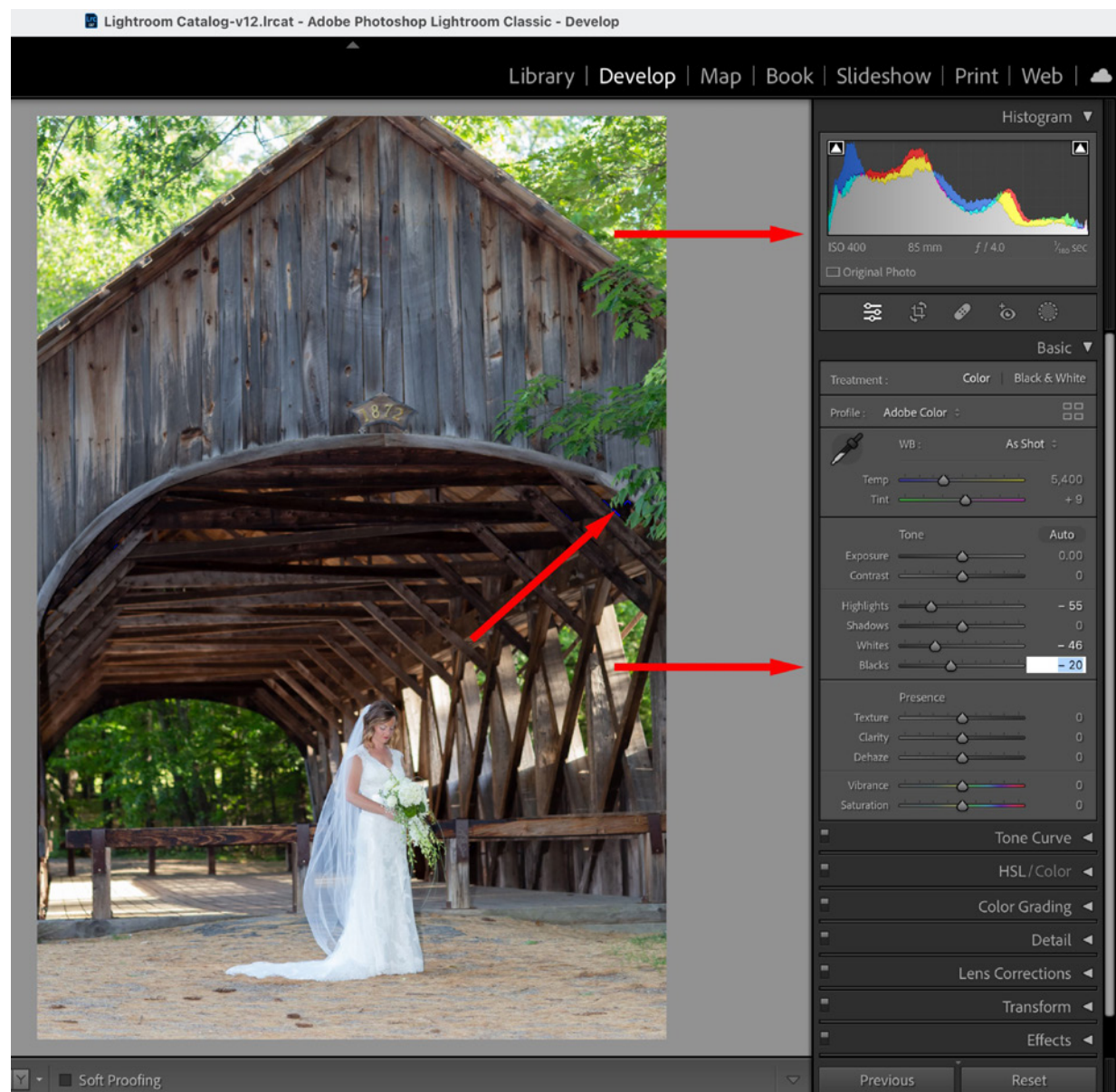


085 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Let's move our eyes down to the 'Basic' tab. The next few steps in the Fundamental Editing List will occur here.

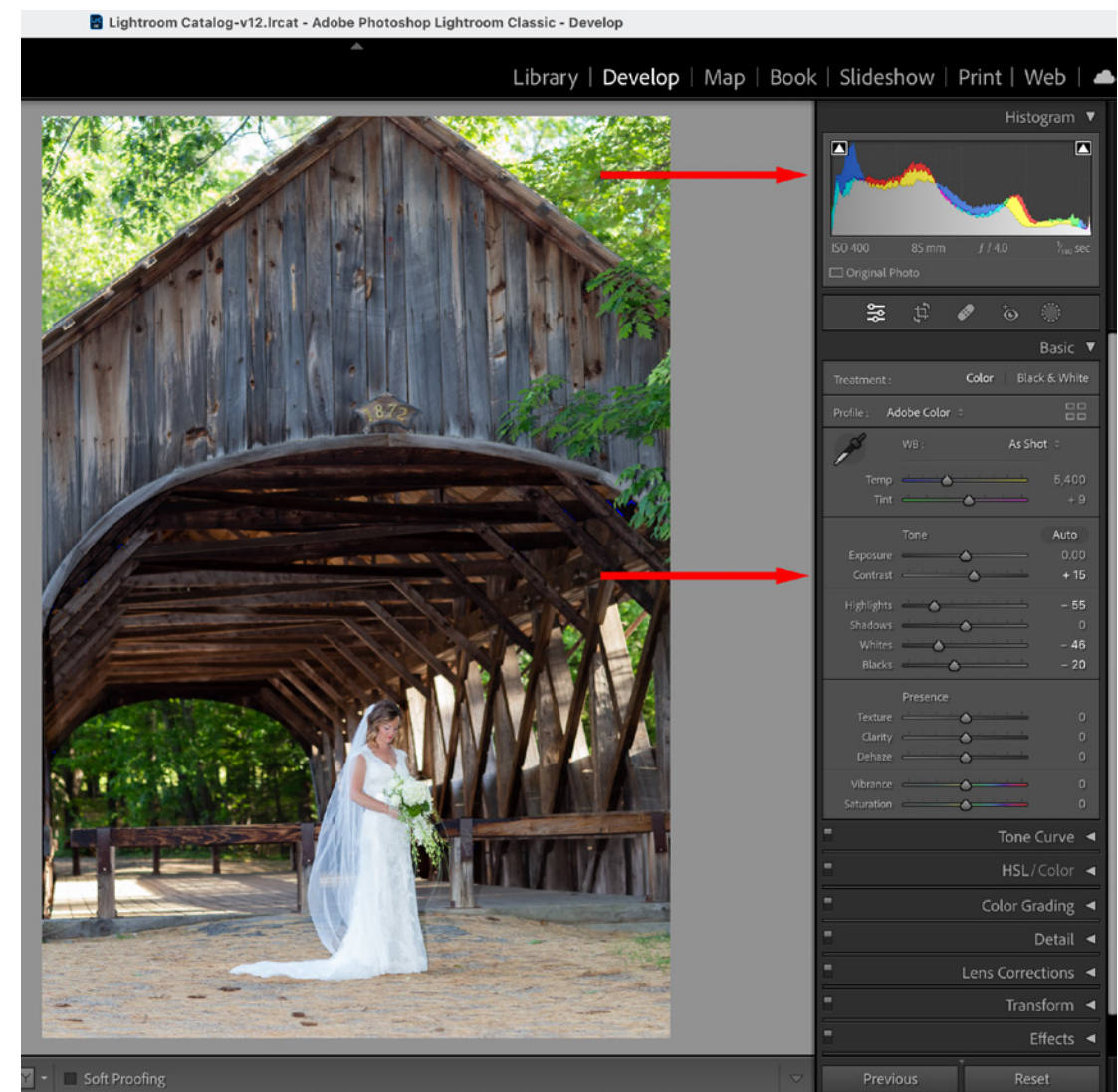
When new photographers begin post-production editing and have an exposure issue, they tend to go to the Exposure slider. That would seem to make sense, right? Generally, **this is not** your best option. I only use the Exposure slider when the image's exposure is WAY OFF in one direction or the other. These are the sliders that you generally want to work with: Highlights, Shadows, Whites, and Blacks. If you're not familiar with precisely what those terms mean and how they will affect the image, go back and read the Photoshop section.

In Reference 085, you will notice that all of my exposure issues were at the highlight end of the scale. I was able to bring my Histogram under control and reduce the clipping to just a tiny bit by using the Highlights and Whites sliders. I always leave just a little bit of clipping on both ends. (The amount of clipping that I leave is so tiny that you may not be able to see it in the reference images.) If you don't know why I leave a little bit of clipping, read the Photoshop section called 'Setting the White Point and Setting the Black Point.'



086 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 086, I have set the Black Point by reducing the Blacks slider until the Shadow Clipping Indicator begins to light up (where the red arrow points at the bridge).

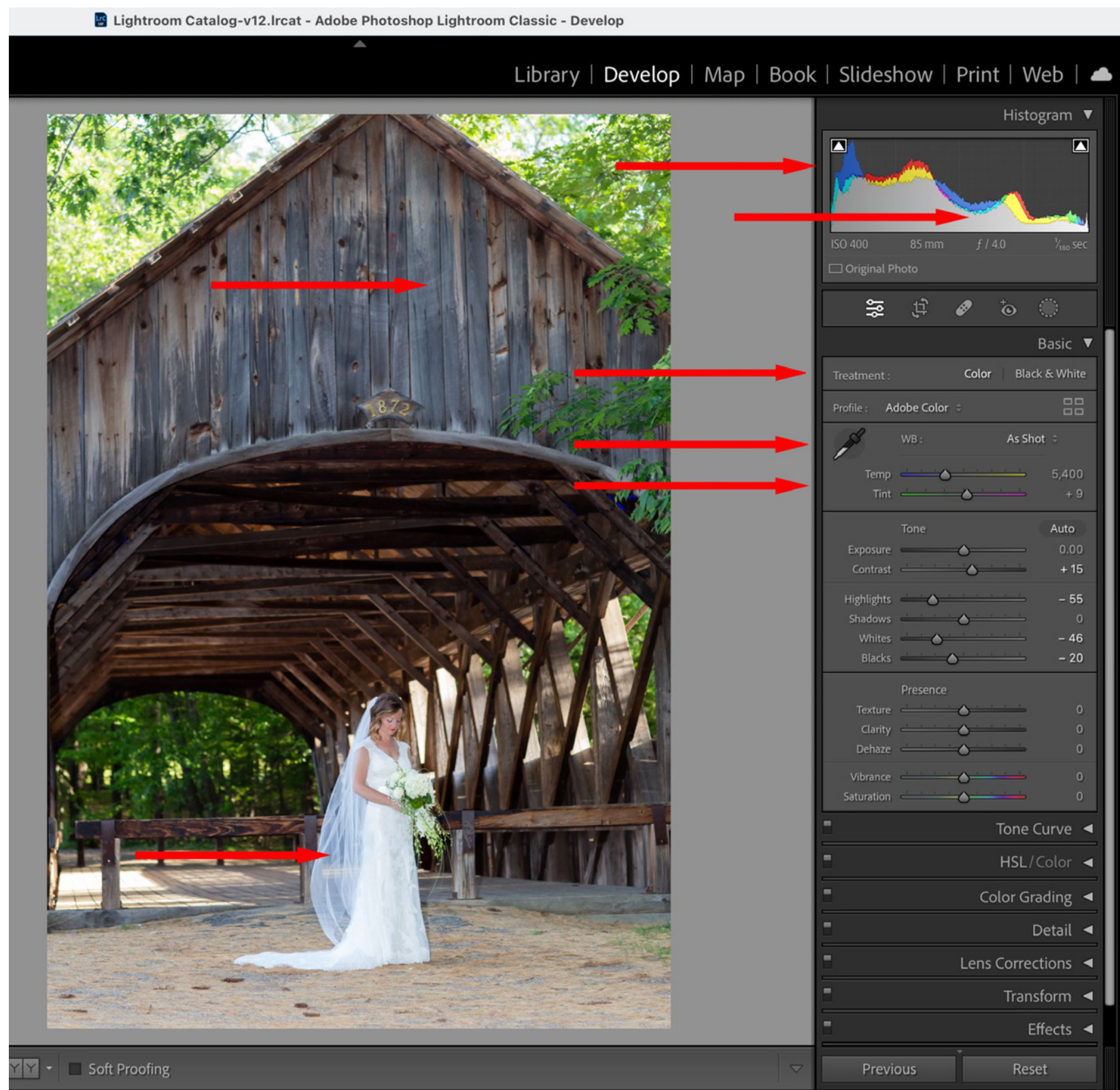


087 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

The last step in the Global Exposure Adjustment process is Contrast. I talked about evaluating contrast back in the Photoshop section. There is no magic bullet in assessing contrast. Monitor calibration is a helpful tool. Outside of that, it combines what your eyes see and what the Histogram tells you.

The bridal portrait was shot in deep shade, and even though a fill flash was used, the contrast is a little flat to my eye. I increased the contrast to +15.

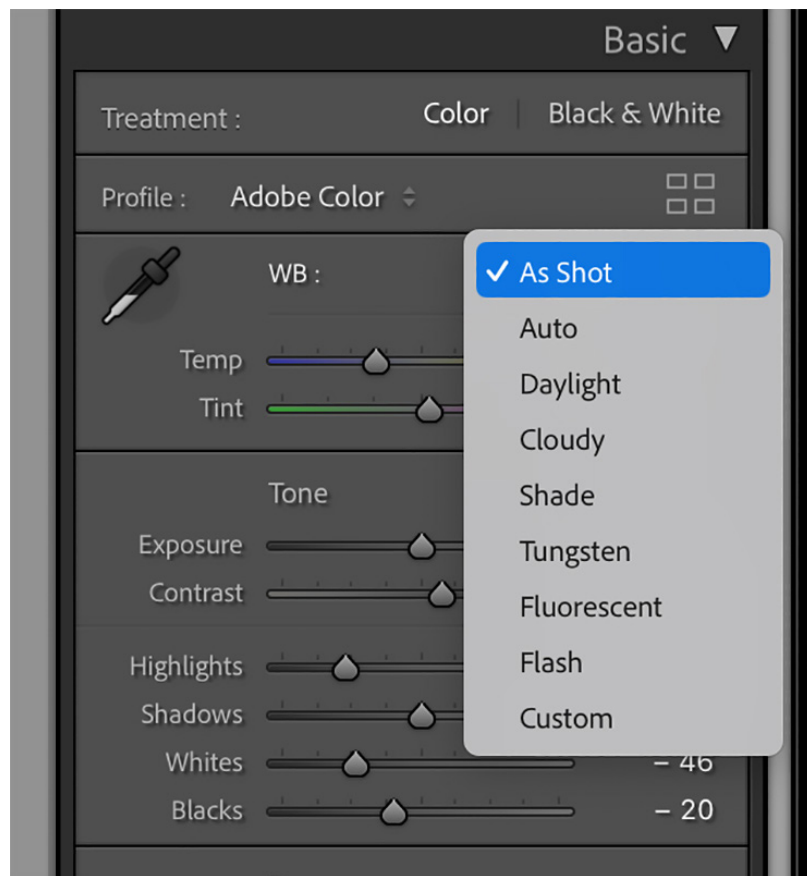
Note: When adjusting the Contrast, keep an eye on your Histogram, as this edit might reintroduce some Clipping.



Steps Seven & Eight – Color Temperature & Color Tint

When evaluating the 'Temp' and 'Tint' (the color balance of your image), it is a process of using the Histogram, the slider settings, and your eyes. Look at Reference 088. Notice that we are now looking at the toolbox above – the one that we were using for the Global Exposure Adjustment.

Note: At the top of the toolbox, you'll see where it says 'Treatment,' 'Color,' and 'Black & White.' This is one option that Lightroom has for converting your color file to a black and white photograph. I DO NOT recommend using this method for black and white conversion. Photzy published a guide specific to black and white conversion called 'Better Black & White.' If you love creating black and white images, I would consider picking that up. Below is a link to that guide.



089 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

BETTER BLACK & WHITE

Below the Treatment line, you will see 'Profile,' 'Eyedropper,' 'WB,' and (in this case set to) 'As Shot.'

The Profile and WB sections are dropdown menus with presets for white balance. I don't use them, and I don't recommend that you use them. Feel free to try them out. I'm more of a stickler to get the color to my values than Adobe's.

The Eyedropper will be our primary tool for setting the Temp and Tint, but let's talk about the WB dropdown menu. The WB stands for White Balance. I have set the WB dropdown menu in the 'As Shot' setting.

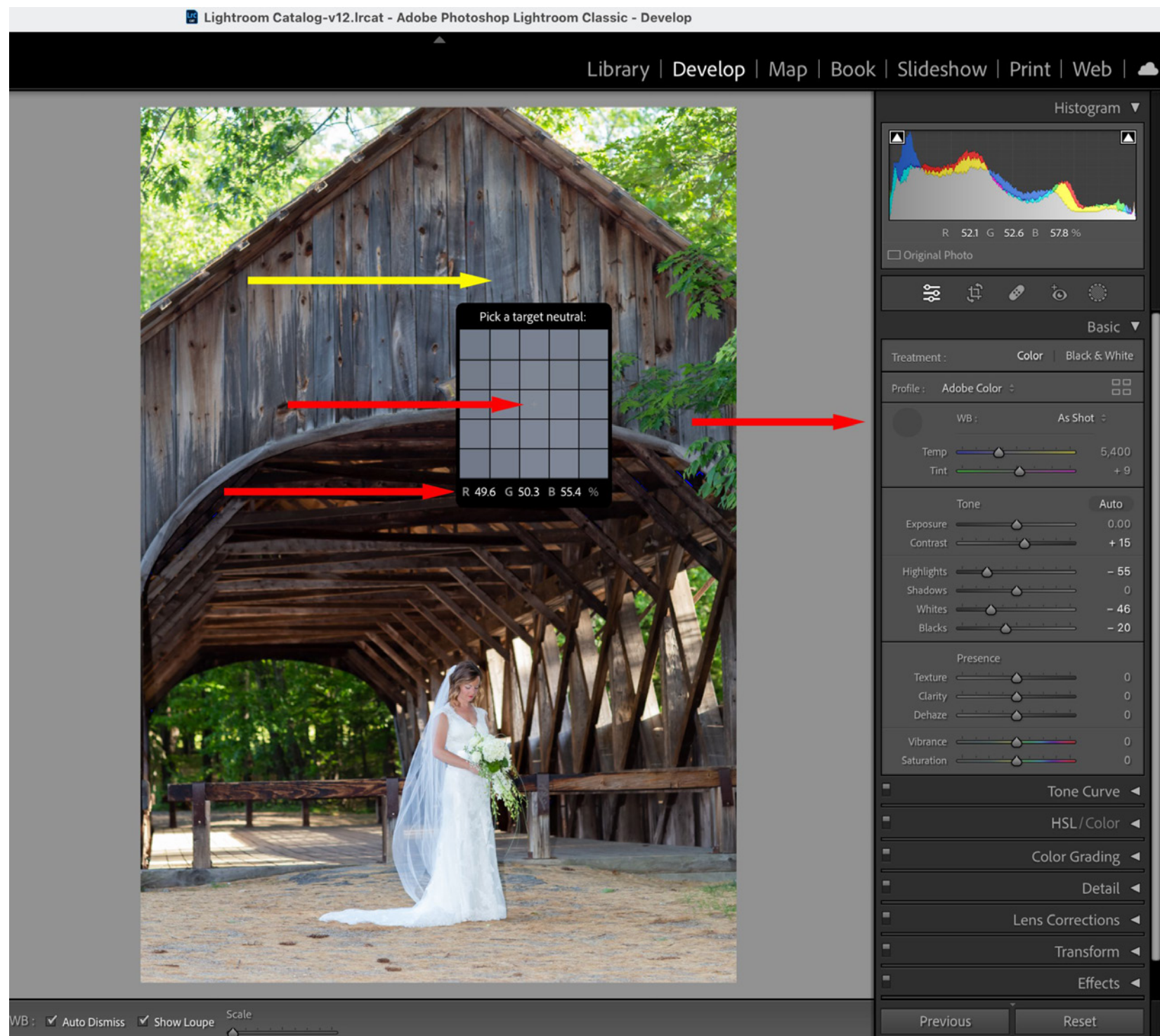
This menu will appear if you click on the 'As Shot' icon (Reference 089). I'm sure you realize this is much like the white balance setting on your camera. I NEVER start the Temp and Tint process on any setting other than 'As Shot.' These other presets are just wild guesses by Adobe's algorithm and will mess you up. The time to make those preset WB decisions is when you're taking a photograph.

Go back to Reference 088.

The Histogram, and a visual check, indicate an elevated level of blue (which is not uncommon for an image that was taken in shaded light).

Select the Eyedropper, which is the White Balance Selector tool.

When your photograph has some color near a clean 18% gray, you'll want to use that for your sample. If it doesn't, then look for a clean white area. If your image has neither of those, then you're probably better off adjusting Temp and Tint using just a visual check. If you're nerdy about these things, you can incorporate an 18% gray card into your scene and then remove it in post-production. Professional photographers do this all the time.



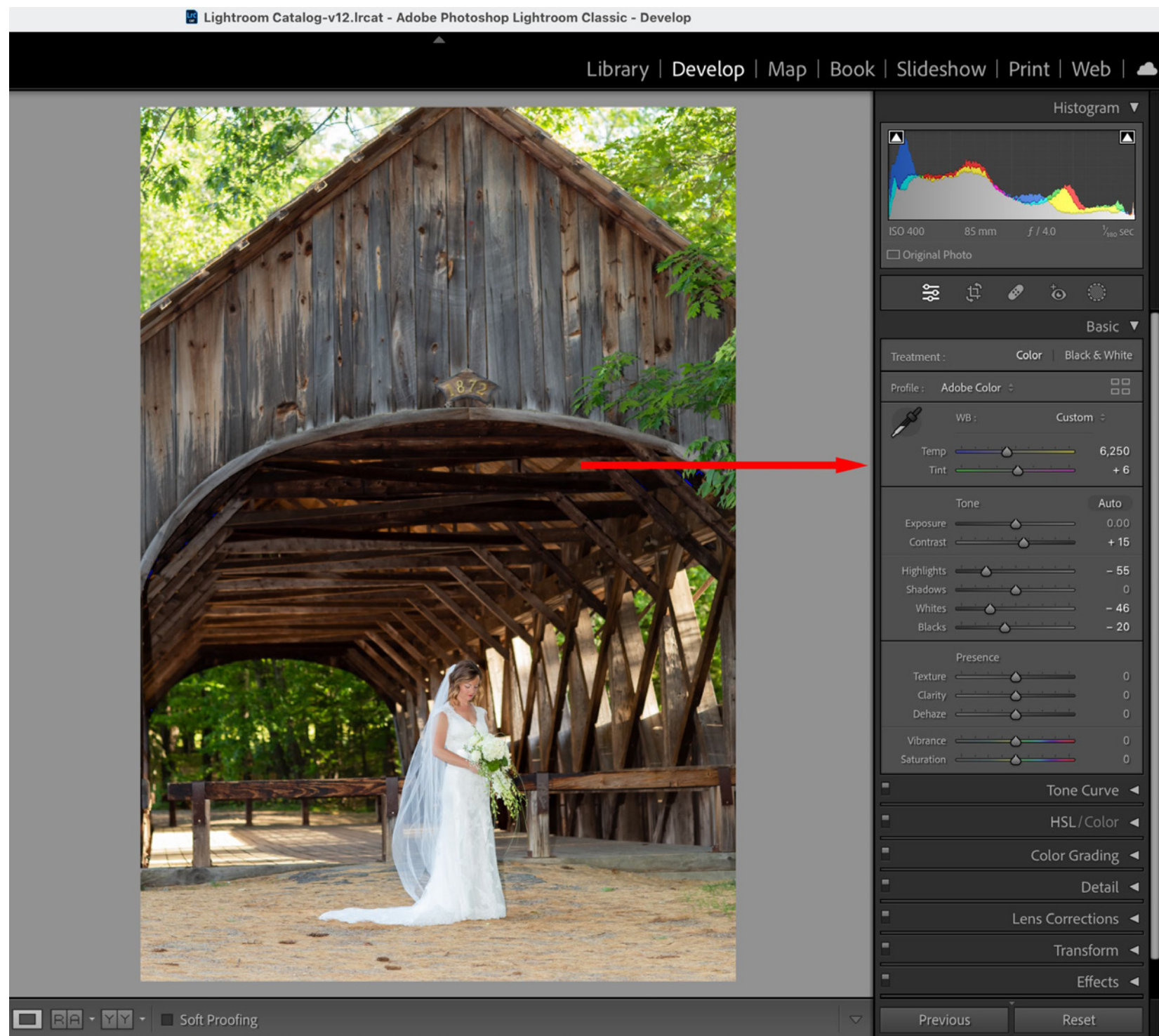
090 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

We have a nice clean gray color on the bridge for our bridal portrait. We also have some reasonably clean highlights on the bride's dress. In the Photoshop section, we looked at selecting from various points within the scene. Some worked better than others, so go back and read that section if you missed it.

If possible, always make your selection from a clean mid-tone gray area.

Once you select the Eyedropper and move it over the Preview image, it disappears out of the circle on the right. A 25-chip box will show up. The + sign in the center box indicates the selection point for the Eyedropper. The other boxes will give you a visual reference as to whether another nearby point would be a better selection. Another valuable tool that Lightroom provides is the RGB readout at the bottom of the 25-chip box. The closer these three numbers match in value, the cleaner your sample is.

The yellow arrow indicates where I took my selection from on the Preview image.



091 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

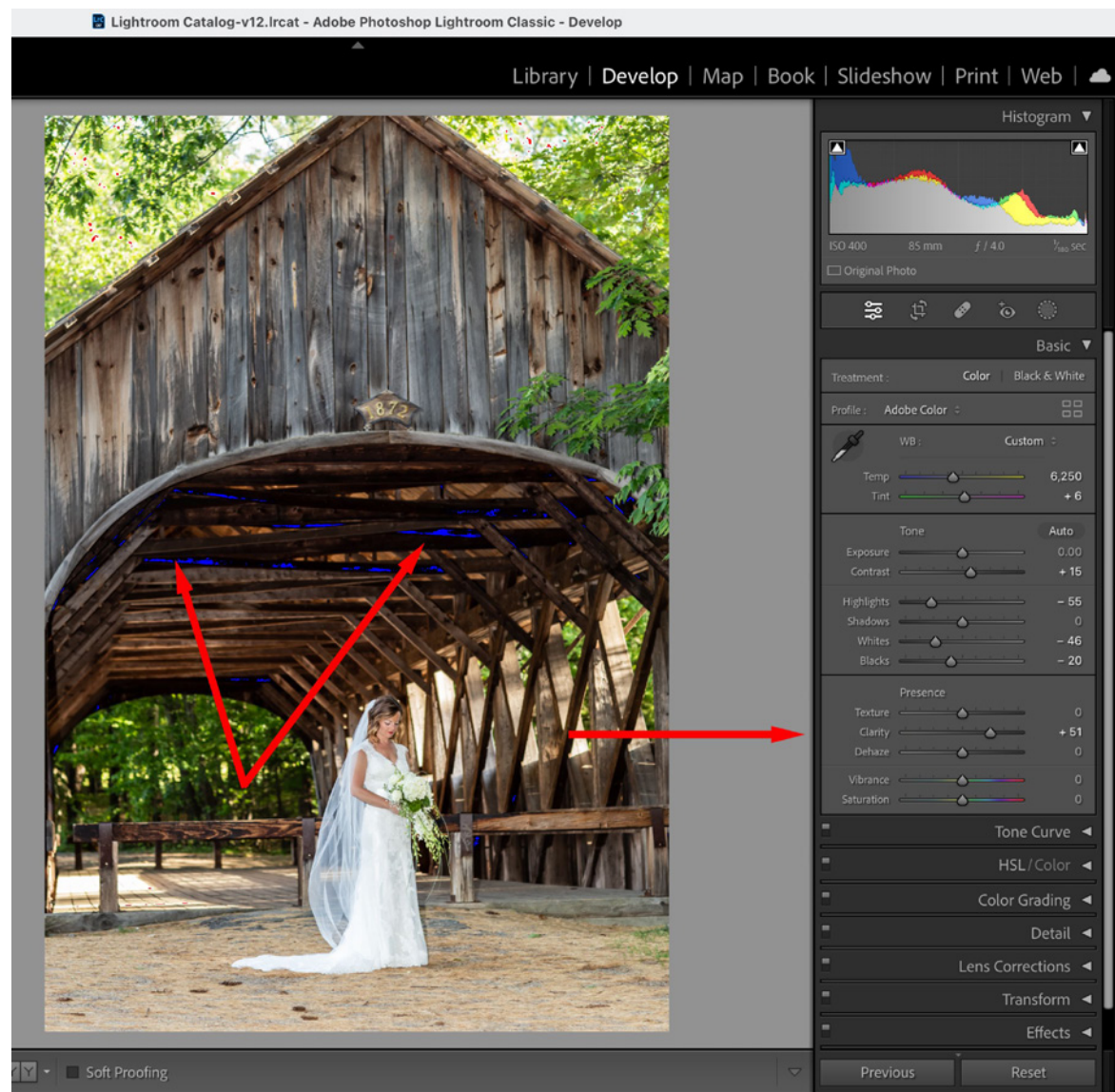
After clicking the Eyedropper on a nice and clean area of gray on the bridge, you can see (visually) how the image has been warmed up. Look at the Temp and Tint sliders in Reference 091. They've both moved to the right. If you go back and look at this edit in the Photoshop section, the numbers are very close. At this point, you want to visually confirm if you like the color of the Preview image. If not, select the Eyedropper and try again. It's worth playing around with this to get a feel for how much the color can change when the Eyedropper is in a different location. Finally, look at the Histogram. The elevation of 'Blue' has dropped and the 'Red' and 'Yellow' channels have slightly increased.

The image looks really good!

Let's take a breather and do a quiz.

Self-Check Quiz

1. True or False: To access an image in Lightroom, you have to select 'Import' under the 'Library' menu.
2. True or False: The 'Import' button is located in the upper left of the workspace.
3. Keywording is important because _____.
4. True or False: To cycle through the various crop overlay options, you would press the 'd' key.
5. In the noise reduction process, which one do you do first: Luminance or Chroma?
6. True or False: With Lightroom, you can tell that the Clipping indicators are on because they'll display a red box around the triangle.
7. Under which tab are the 'Exposure' adjustment tools found?
8. True or False: The Eyedropper will give you an exact reading when setting the contrast.
9. True or False: The 'WB' should always be set to 'Auto.'
10. True or False: When using the White Balance Selector, look for a white sample first and then use a gray area if no white area is available.
11. How can you use the 25-chip box to determine if a sample color is clean?



092 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

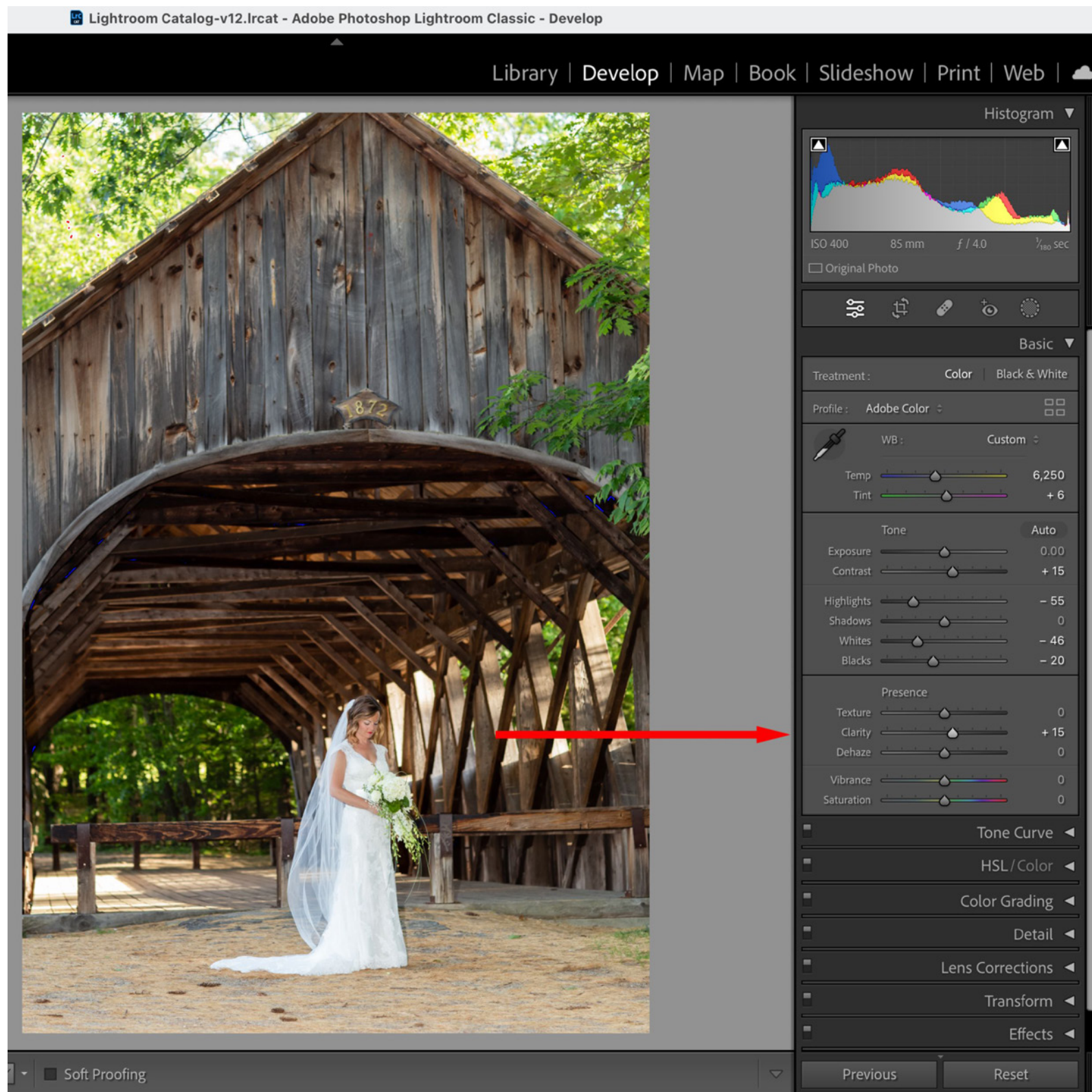
Step Nine – Clarity

There was some general information about the Clarity adjustment made in the Photoshop section. If you skipped it, go back and read that.

The main point to Clarity is this: the Clarity adjustment increases contrast primarily in the mid-tones, which creates a sharpening effect without adding noise.

Here are several more points about using the Clarity adjustment in Lightroom.

- 'Clarity' is located in the 'Presence' section at the bottom of the 'Basic' toolbox.
- Previously, we discussed moving an adjustment slider in steps rather than just grabbing and moving the handle. The first method involves highlighting the name (in this case, 'Clarity') and then pressing the + or – keys. This changes the slider in increments of five. The second method is highlighting the box where the adjustment numbers appear and using the up and down arrow keys. This moves the slider in increments of one. The second method is my preferred method.
- I judge the Clarity setting by watching the Histogram, Preview picture, and Clipping Indicators. I'll run the Clarity up until the Clipping indicators start popping up everywhere. Then, I'll slowly back it down, using the up and down arrow keys, until most of the Clipping indicators have disappeared.
- In Reference 092, the shadow Clipping indicators really popped up at +51.

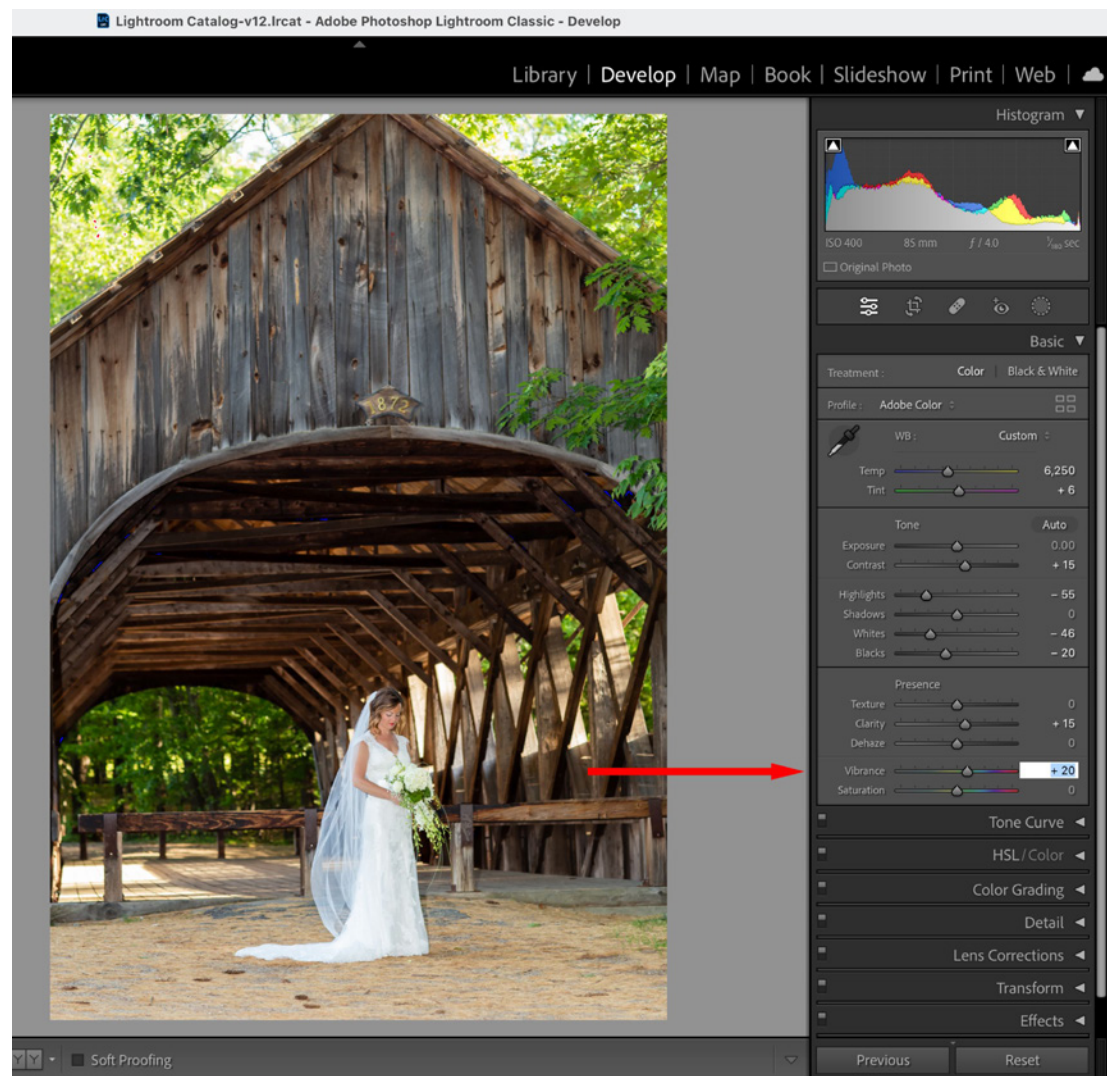


Using the 'down' arrow key, I backed down on the Clarity setting until the Clipping indicators had subdued to an acceptable amount. Remember what I stated earlier. Leaving a small amount of clipping in unimportant areas is a good idea to ensure a full tonal range within your final photograph.

My final Clarity setting ended up being +15.

Key Lesson: I hope you're beginning to realize why it is essential to do any sharpening **last** on the Fundamental Editing List. Some of our adjustments are adding the appearance of sharpening without adding noise. This will allow us to use a lower Sharpening setting at the end of the editing session, lowering the possibility of noise and artifacts.

093 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault



094 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Steps Ten & Eleven – Vibrance & Saturation

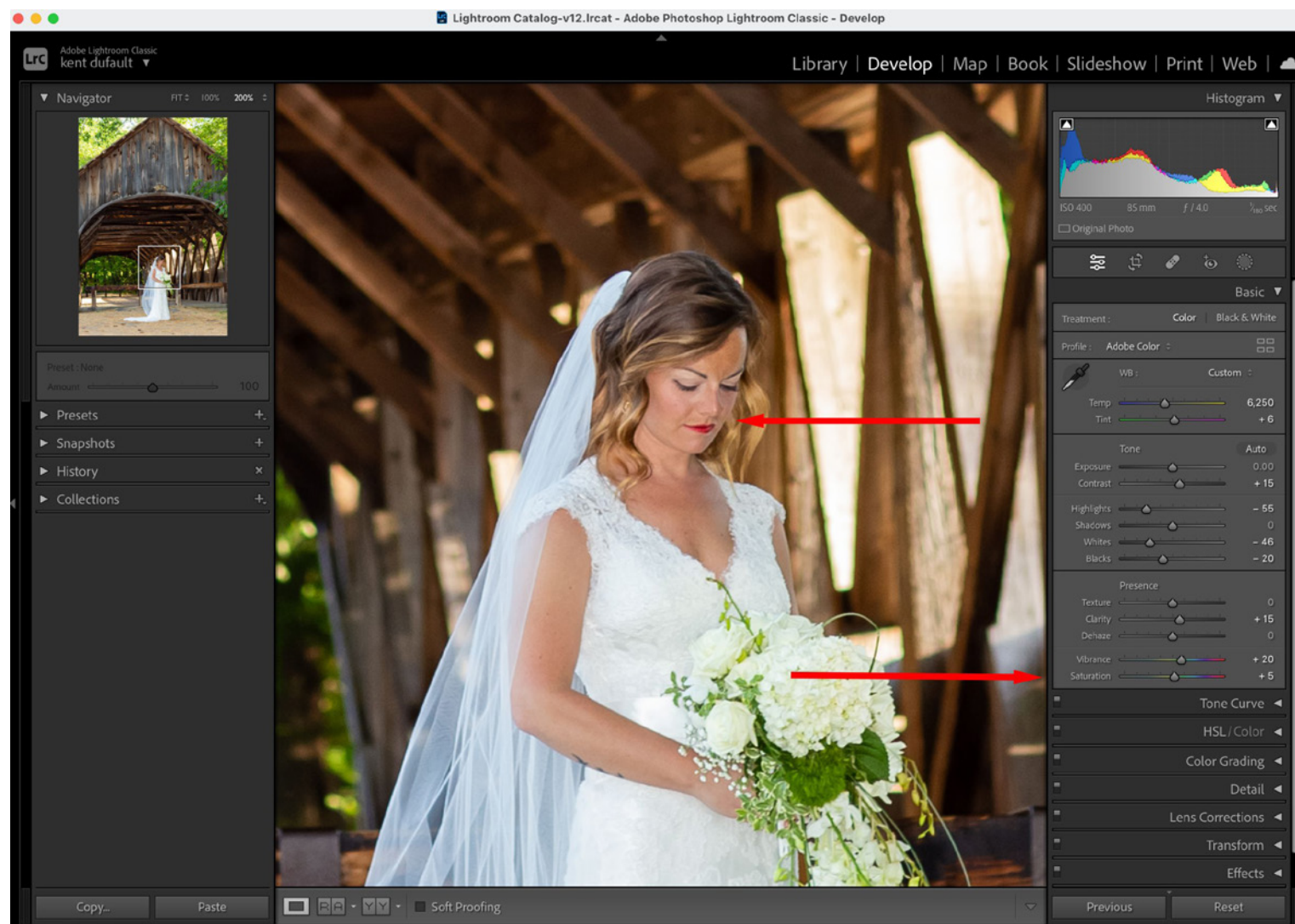
Read the Photoshop section on this if you skipped it. In that section, I put a lot of information on the 'what' and 'why' of these two adjustments.

Here are several important points regarding Vibrance and Saturation.

- Always adjust the Vibrance first and then the Saturation.
- When adjusting both, watch for an increase in Clipping.
- When adjusting Saturation, I find it best to zoom in to a 200% view and then visually check the areas you're trying to affect as you move the slider. This way, you can avoid an oversaturated look and unpleasant artifacts.
- Again, use your keyboard keys for incremental adjustments.

Note: Lightroom has several ways to adjust the color of your photos. Most notable are the HSL and Color Grading sections. HSL allows you to adjust more individual color channels than what is found in the Basic toolbox. Color Grading is primarily for special effects, in my opinion. I will not use those tools as this guide is meant to be geared toward those learning, but they are fun and can do some great things to your photos. But for this guide, we will go with simplicity and realism.

When adjusting the Vibrance setting, I have the Preview set for 'Fit' because I want to see the overall effect on the image. As I change the slider, I watch the Preview window and the Histogram. In the case of this photograph, there was a relatively wide acceptable window. I chose a setting of +20 because that is what looked good to my eye.



095 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

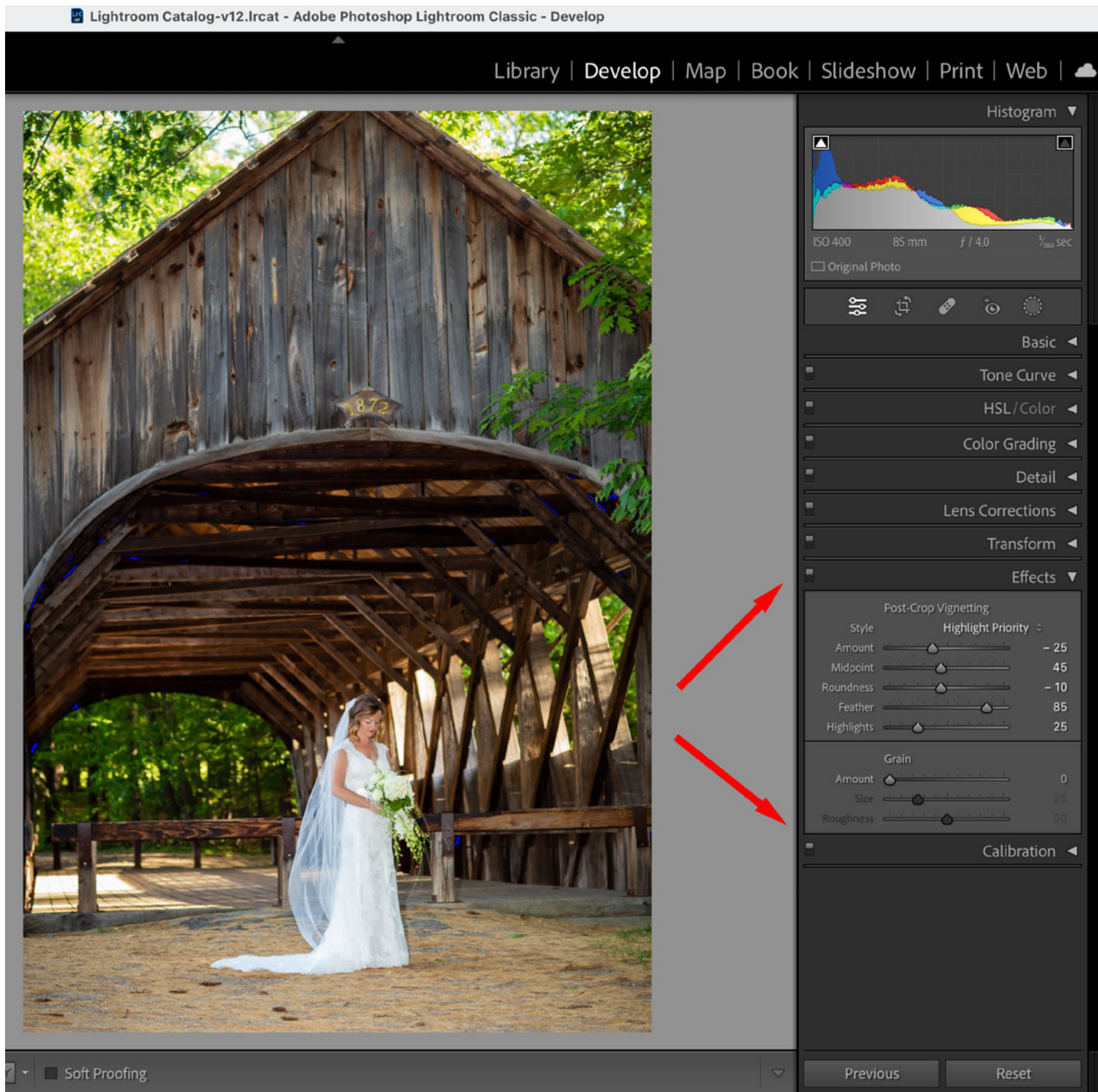
The Saturation setting is a different story, especially if you're working on photos of people. Oversaturating a color (or colors) might look neat in an artistic photograph, but it isn't very pleasing for a portrait or any shot where the subject or client expects a certain level of accurate color.

When adjusting the Saturation for this bridal portrait, I had two concerns: the bride's skin tones and her ruby-red lips.

I zoomed my Preview window to 200%. I positioned the image so that I could see both areas. Using the up and down arrow keyboard method, I watched these two areas as I adjusted the Saturation slider. The lips became completely oversaturated at +10. I backed down one step at a time until the lips were bright and colorful but didn't exhibit any artifacts. My final setting was +5. In this setting, the skin tones were no problem as well.

I added some interesting information about adjusting Vibrance and Saturation in the Elements section. Make sure you read that as well!

For now, that concludes what we will accomplish from the Fundamental Editing List in the 'Basic' toolbox. Close it and scroll down to the 'Effects' toolbox and click the triangle to open it up.



096 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

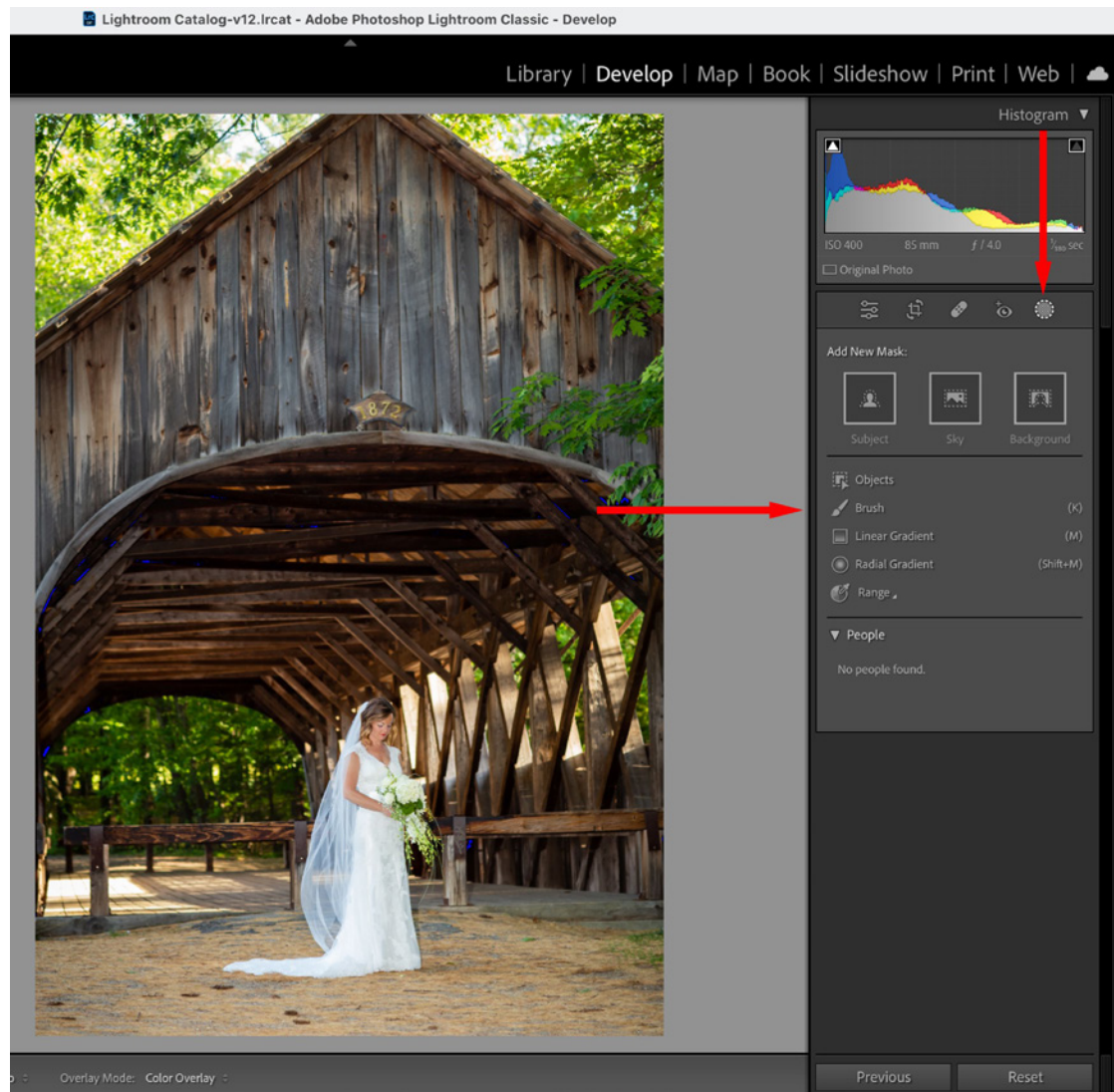
Step Twelve – Effects/Vignette

If you have strong feelings about using a vignette, read my explanation in the Photoshop section as to why it is on my Fundamental Editing List. I also gave detailed steps on setting up the vignette in the Photoshop section. I think the setting up aspect is quite important. I won't repeat it here in the Lightroom section because it works exactly the same way.

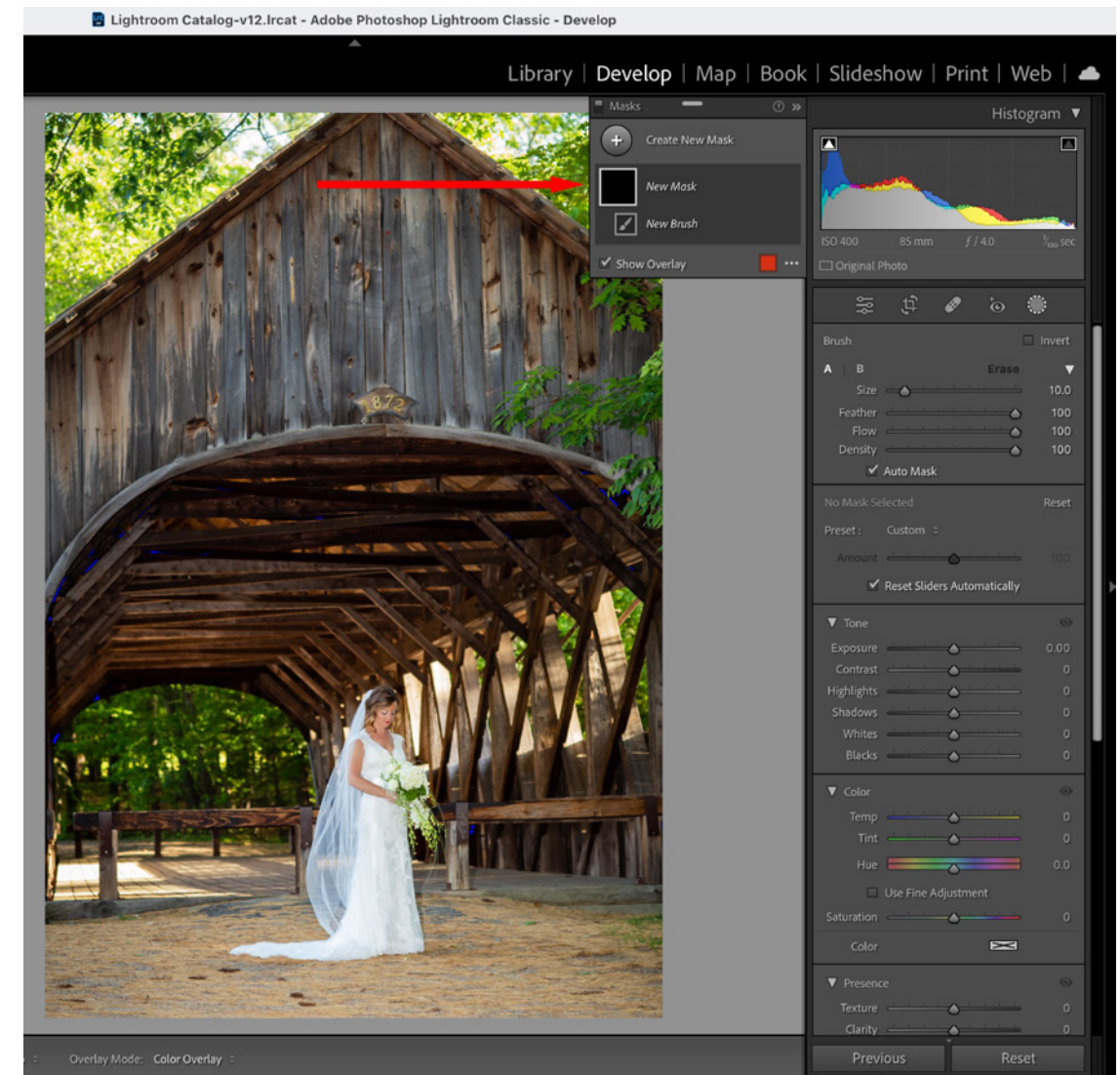
Reference 096 indicates my settings for the vignette. (Again, read the 'how' and 'why' in the Photoshop section.)

Step Thirteen – Effects/Dehaze

Return to the 'Basic' toolbox and locate the Dehaze slider. The Dehaze function is included in my Fundamental Editing List because, under certain circumstances, it works wonders, especially for landscapes. However, this image doesn't require any adjustment to this setting for our bridal portrait. Read the Photoshop section on Step Thirteen for more detailed information on the Dehaze slider and what it can do.



097 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault



098 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

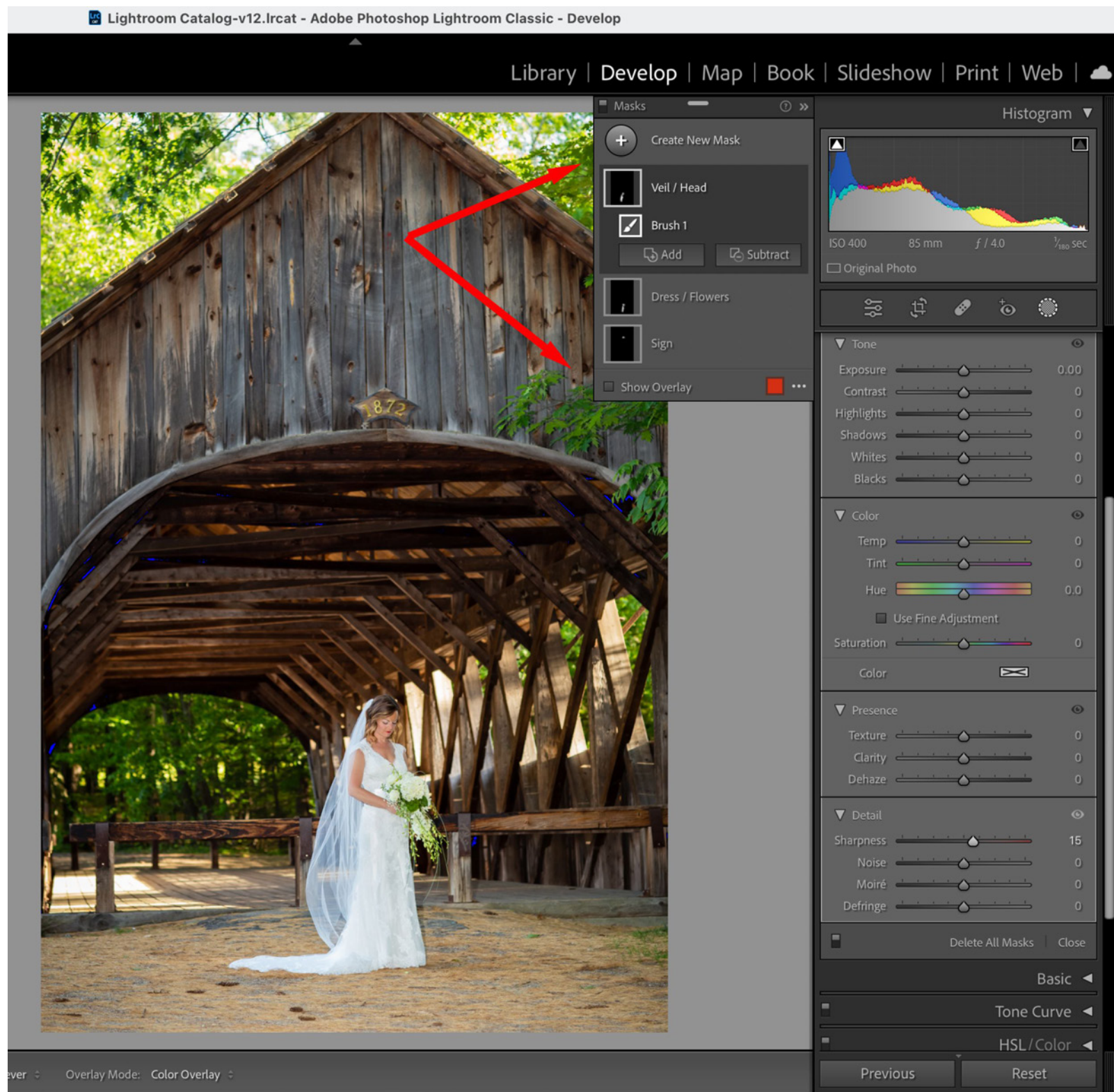
Step Fourteen – Localized Adjustments with the Brush Tool

There is a lot of information on this step in the Photoshop section, including other recommended reading and viewing. Please make sure that you read that first.

Reference 097 shows you where the 'Masking' section is located. There you will find the Brush tool in Lightroom.

After clicking the 'Brush' icon, a 'Masks' navigation box will open, showing the first mask as a 'New Brush.'

Note: When you click 'Create New Mask,' you will see some AI (Artificial Intelligence) options for selecting a person, people, the sky, objects, or background. I haven't had much luck with these, so I don't use them. I find it quicker to paint with the Brush tool than to futz around trying to make these automatic selections work. But I'm sure they will continue to improve, and you should try them out. For this guide, we will be using the Brush tool.

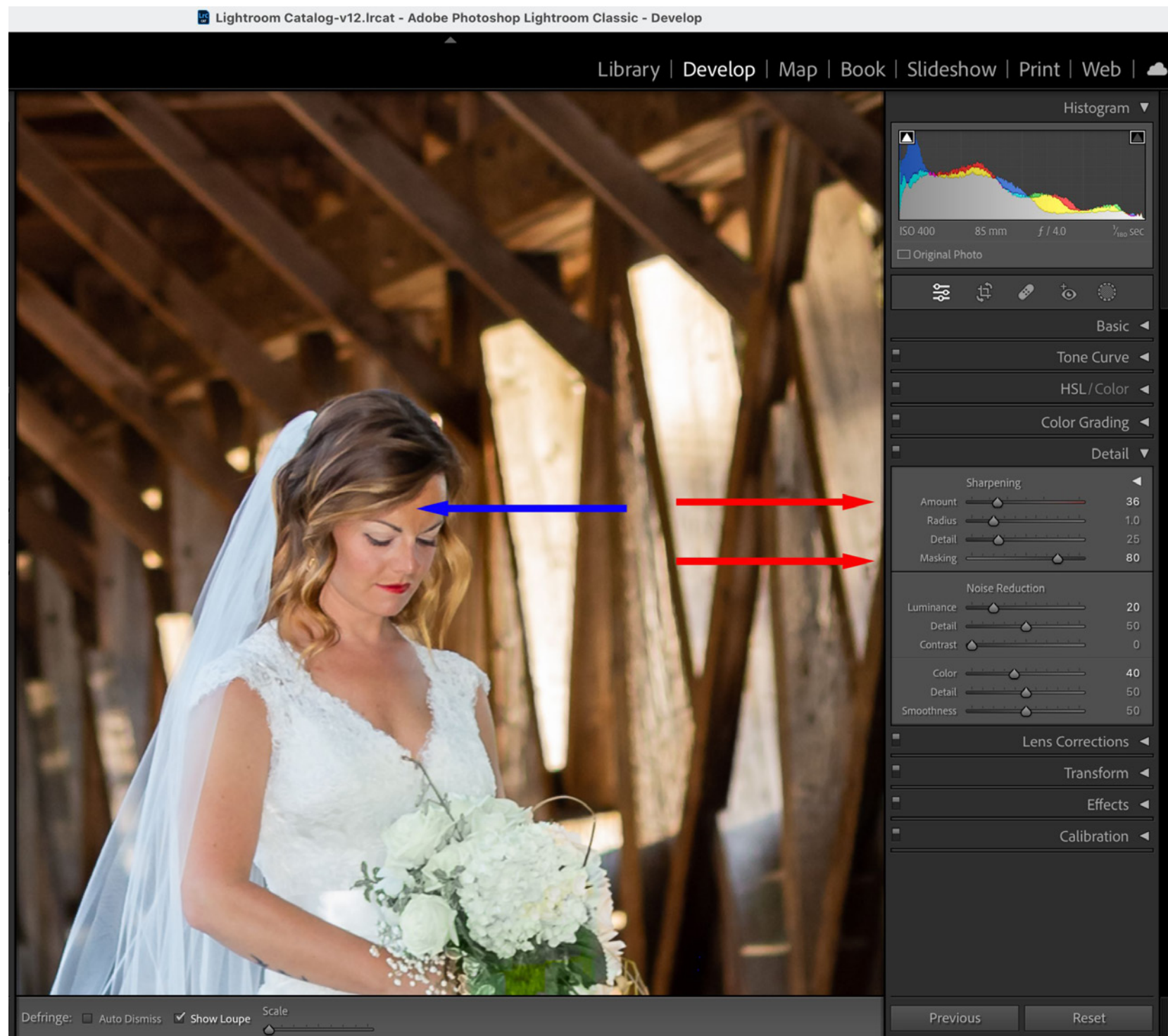


099 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Reference 099 illustrates that I created three masks with the Brush tool, just as I did in the Photoshop section.

Since the interface and tools are the same, I won't repeat every step in the Lightroom section.

If you skipped it or need to review the steps, go read that Photoshop section.



100 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

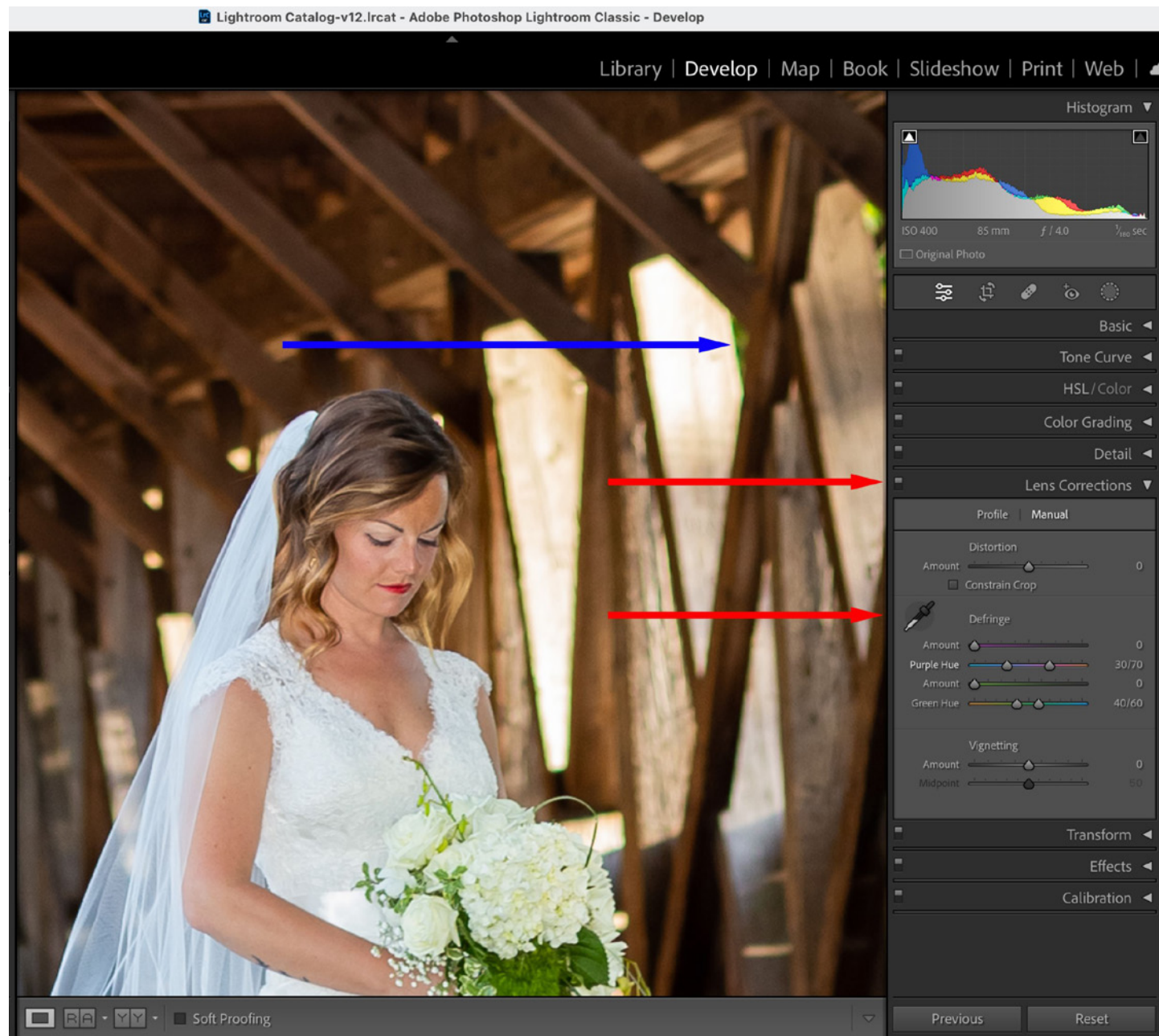
Step Fifteen – Sharpening

This is our final step in the Fundamental Editing List. Again, please review the Photoshop section for important information about Sharpening.

The Lightroom Sharpening sliders operate as described in the Photoshop section.

Outside of all the critical information you **must** read about sharpening in the Photoshop section, I want to hammer home five points.

1. You should do the global sharpening last.
2. You should do localized sharpening of the subject during the Brush tool step, before doing any globalized sharpening.
3. Your Preview window should always be at 200%.
4. Always use the least amount of global sharpening that you can. My settings are almost always between 20 and 40 on the Sharpening Amount slider.



101 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

5. Learn to use the Masking slider. Learning to use this slider (alone) is worth the price of this guide in terms of increasing your image quality.

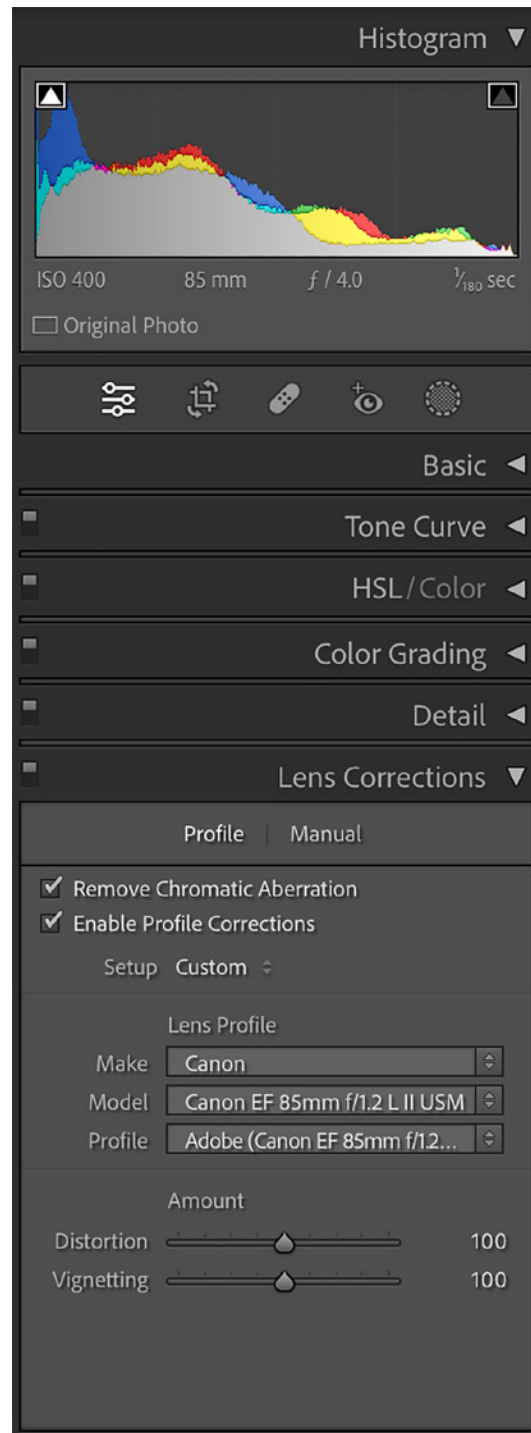
THAT IS THE COMPLETION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL EDITING LIST IN LIGHTROOM!

Key Lesson: So, at the end of the Photoshop section, I dropped a couple of extra pointers onto the Photoshop users. I'm going to add one for you Lightroom folks as well.

We're going to talk about the Lens Corrections section.

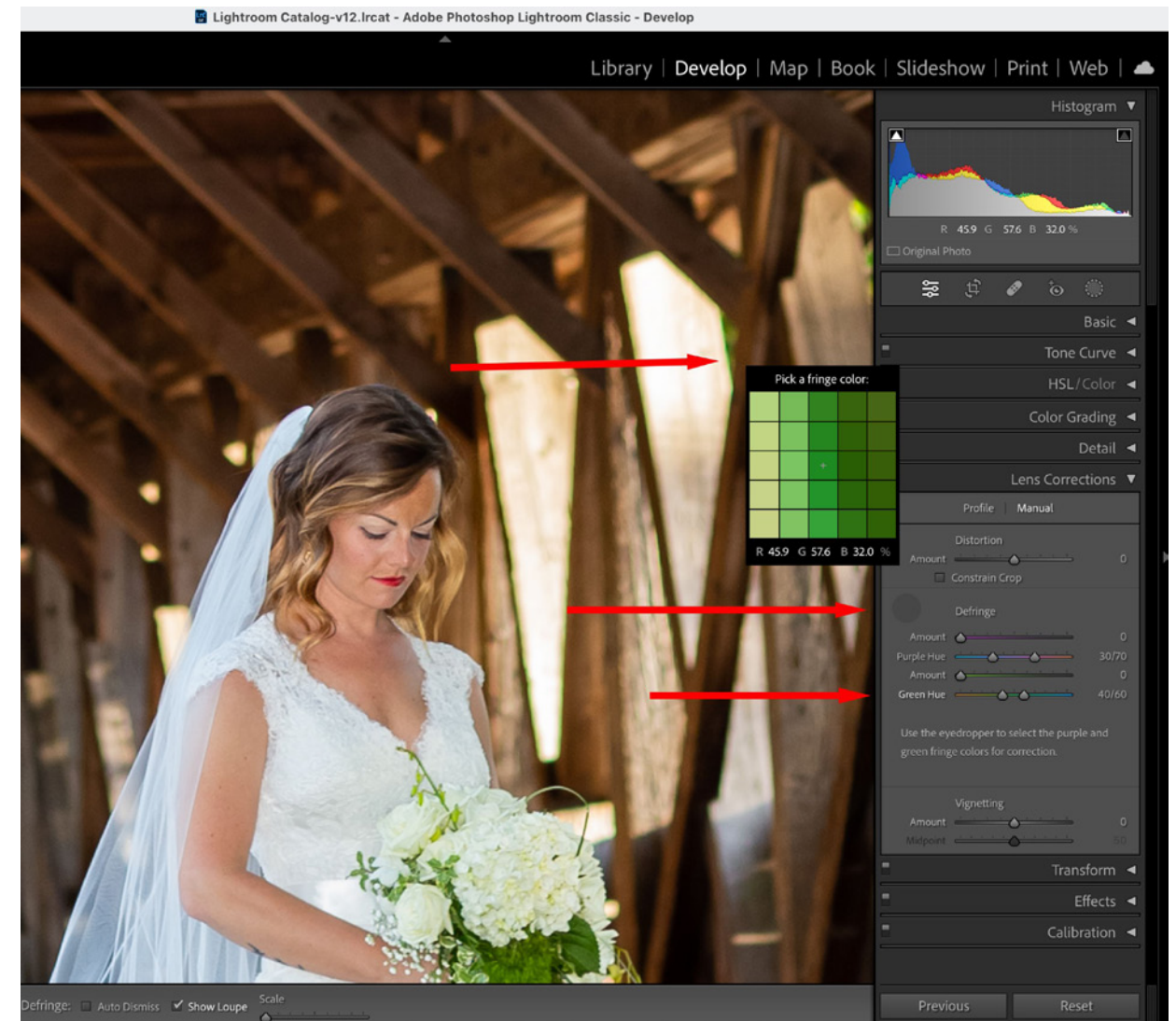
'Fringe' (a lens Chromatic Aberration) can happen with any lens under certain circumstances. With a lower-quality lens, it will happen more often. This image was taken with a Canon 85mm f/1.2 L Series lens; that's a pretty nice lens! Still, there is some 'fringe' (Chromatic Aberration) behind the bride along the uprights of the wooden bridge.

Fringe will appear as a purple or green color that shows up along edges of high contrast. The blue arrow pointing at the bridge in Reference 101 indicates a green fringe along the upright struts of the bridge. To correct this, open the 'Lens Corrections' toolbox. The red arrows indicate the toolbox that you will now see.



102 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

If you are in the 'Profile' toolbox and check the 'Remove Chromatic Aberration' checkbox, it is supposed to automatically remove any fringe. It's never worked well for me. I don't even bother with it anymore. We are going to switch to the 'Manual' toolbox and use the Eyedropper tool.

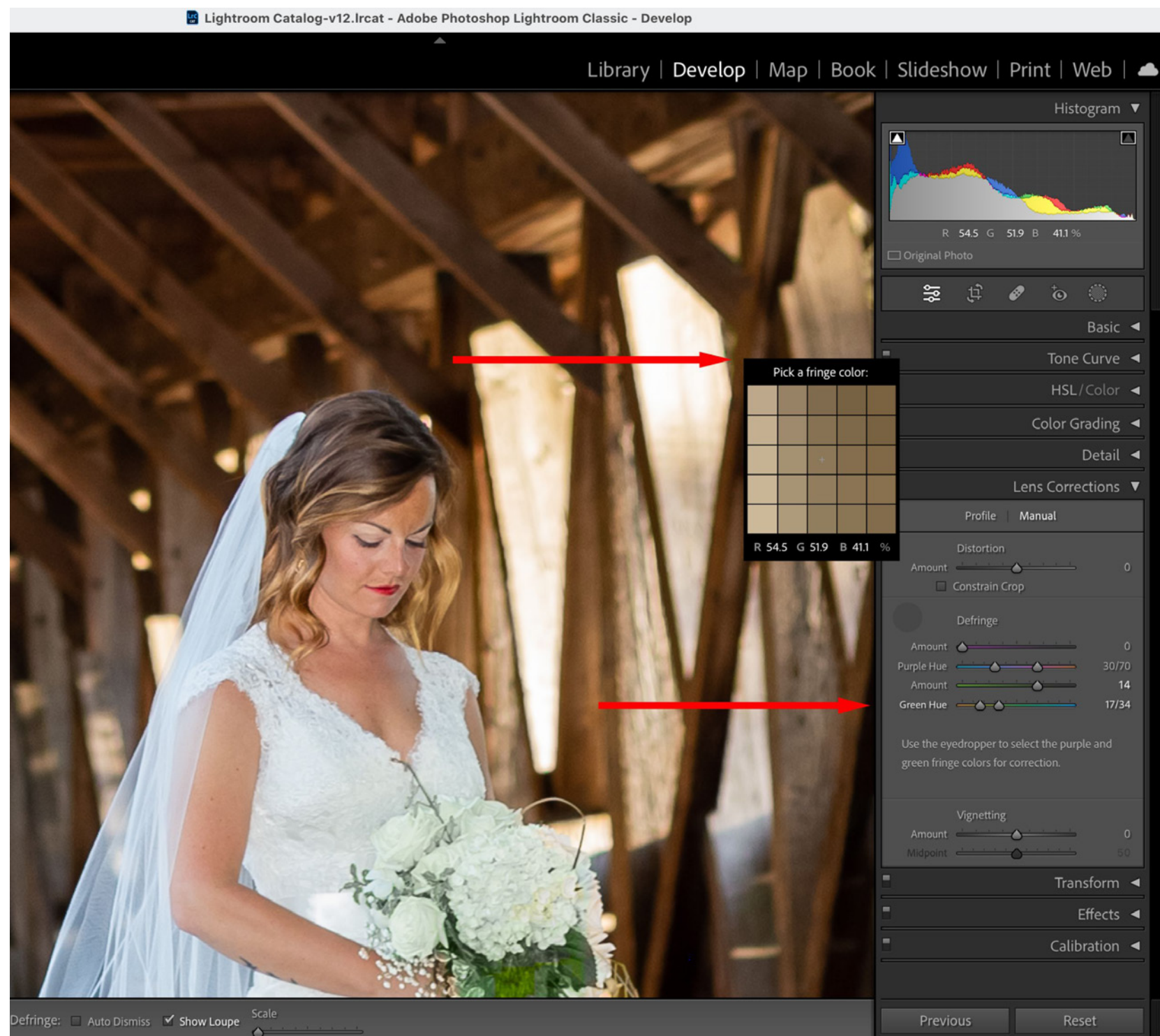


103 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 103, you will see where I selected the Eyedropper tool and moved it over the green fringe behind the bride.

Like the Eyedropper tool used in the White Balance section of the Fundamental Editing List, a grid of 25 blocks appears when you move the cursor over the Preview image.

At this point, it is pretty easy to see the fringing along the bridge timbers.



104 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 104, you can see that after left-clicking Eyedropper, the green fringe has disappeared, and the 'Green Hue' slider has moved.

Like the White Balance section, you can try clicking several times in different spots to get the best result. I'm happy with this first attempt, so I'm leaving it like this.

That takes care of the Chromatic Aberration called Fringe!



This is our final image using Lightroom as our post-production program for the Fundamental Editing List.

Note: I removed the dark clumps of debris around the bride's feet for my final version of the bridal portrait. This is outside of the Fundamental Editing List, so I'm not covering it here.

105 – Photograph and Editing by Kent DuFault

Self-Check Quiz

1. True or False: Clarity primarily adjusts contrast in the shadow areas.
2. True or False: When an adjustment slider is highlighted, using the + or - keys will move the slider in increments of 10.
3. True or False: Always adjust the Vibrance setting first, and then worry about the Saturation setting.
4. True or False: When adjusting the Saturation slider, setting your Preview window to Fill is crucial.
5. True or False: The Vignette settings appear under the Details tab.
6. True or False: It is vital to Dehaze every image!
7. True or False: The Brush toolbox allows you to set up as many masks as you want.
8. To turn the Brush tool Preview Overlay on and off, use the _____ key.
9. True or False: When sharpening, it is very important to do the global sharpening first and then do the localized sharpening.
10. True or False: Chromatic Aberration only occurs with cheap lenses.
11. Fringe, which is a Chromatic Aberration, shows up as a green or _____ line along areas of high contrast.

05

ELEMENTS

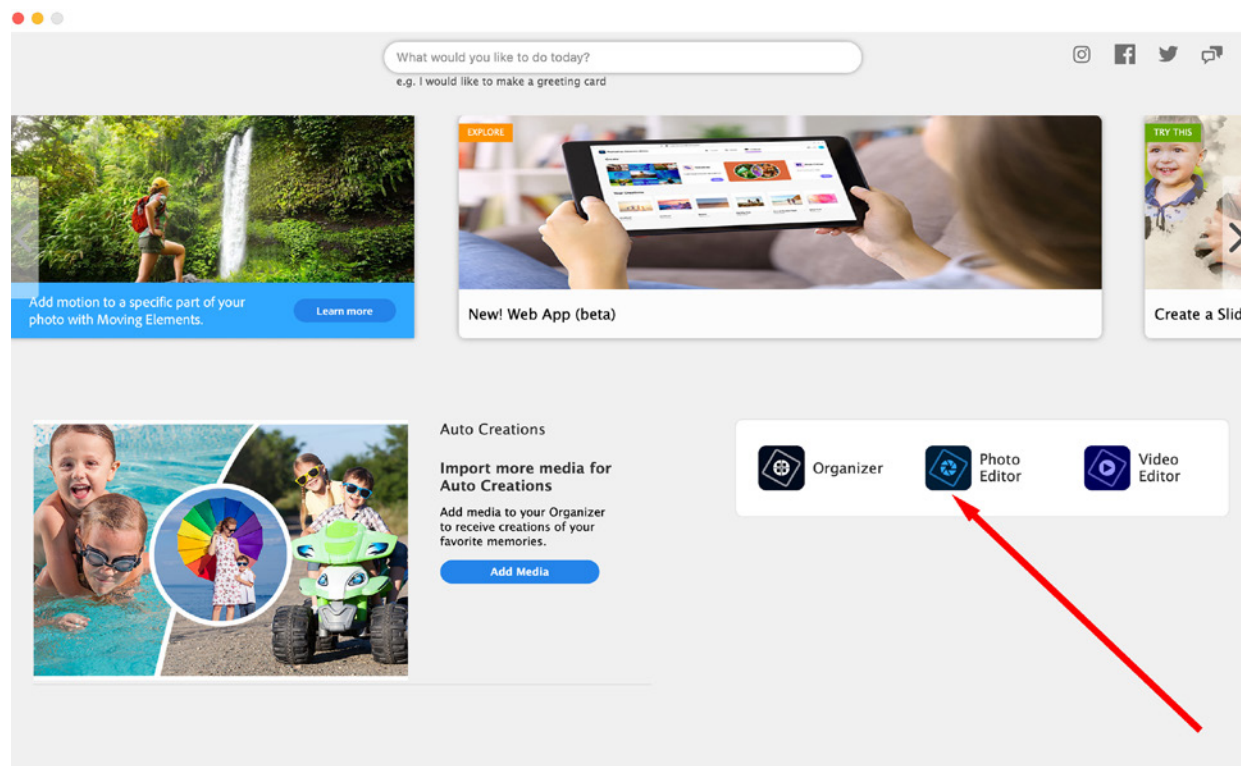
I'm going to repeat this again.

Elements users, if you skipped the Photoshop and Lightroom sections, go back and read them first. There is key information in each section that may not be repeated.

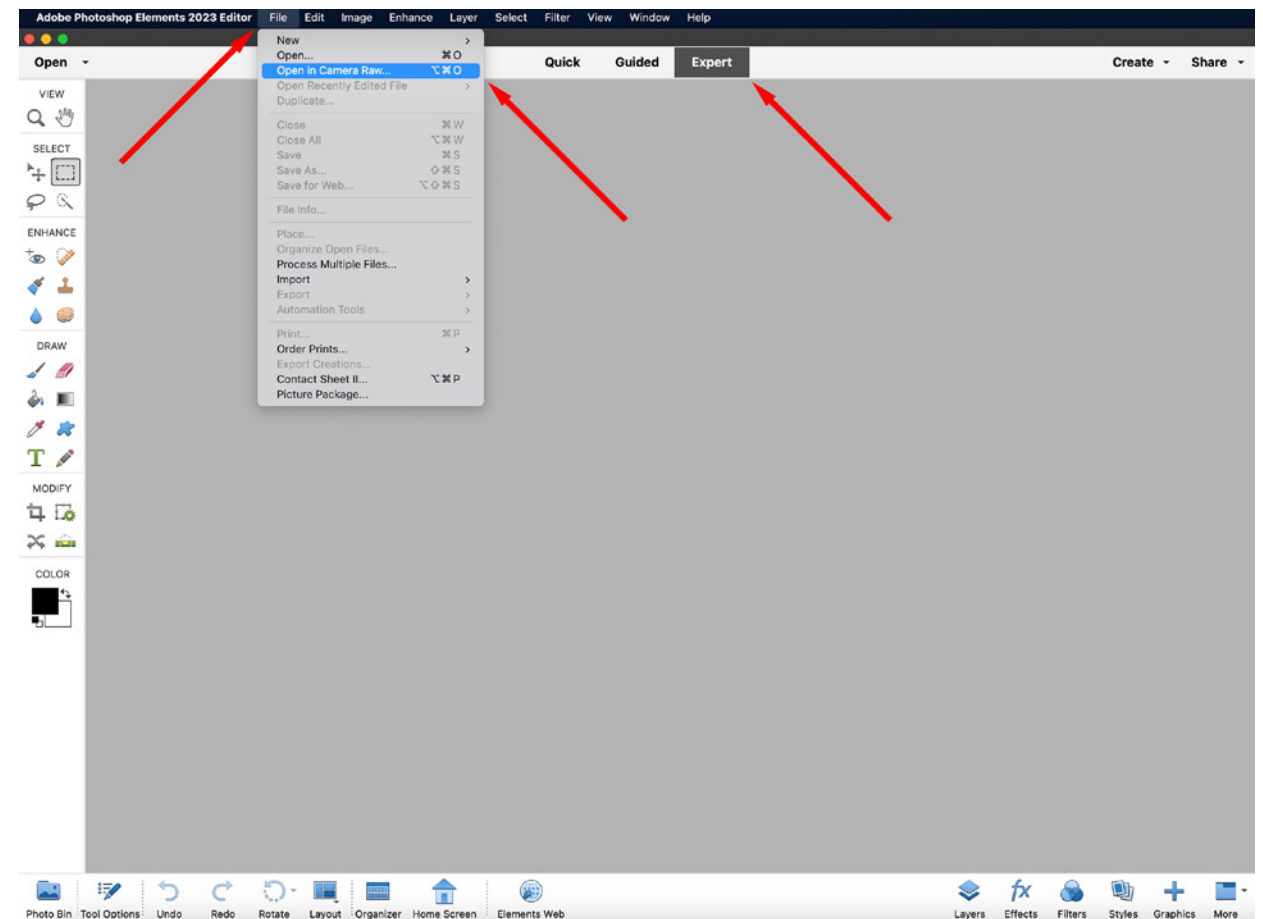
Step One – Opening the Image

Launch Elements and select the 'Photo Editor' option.

Opening an image in Elements is simple. However, there are a few key components that you want to follow.

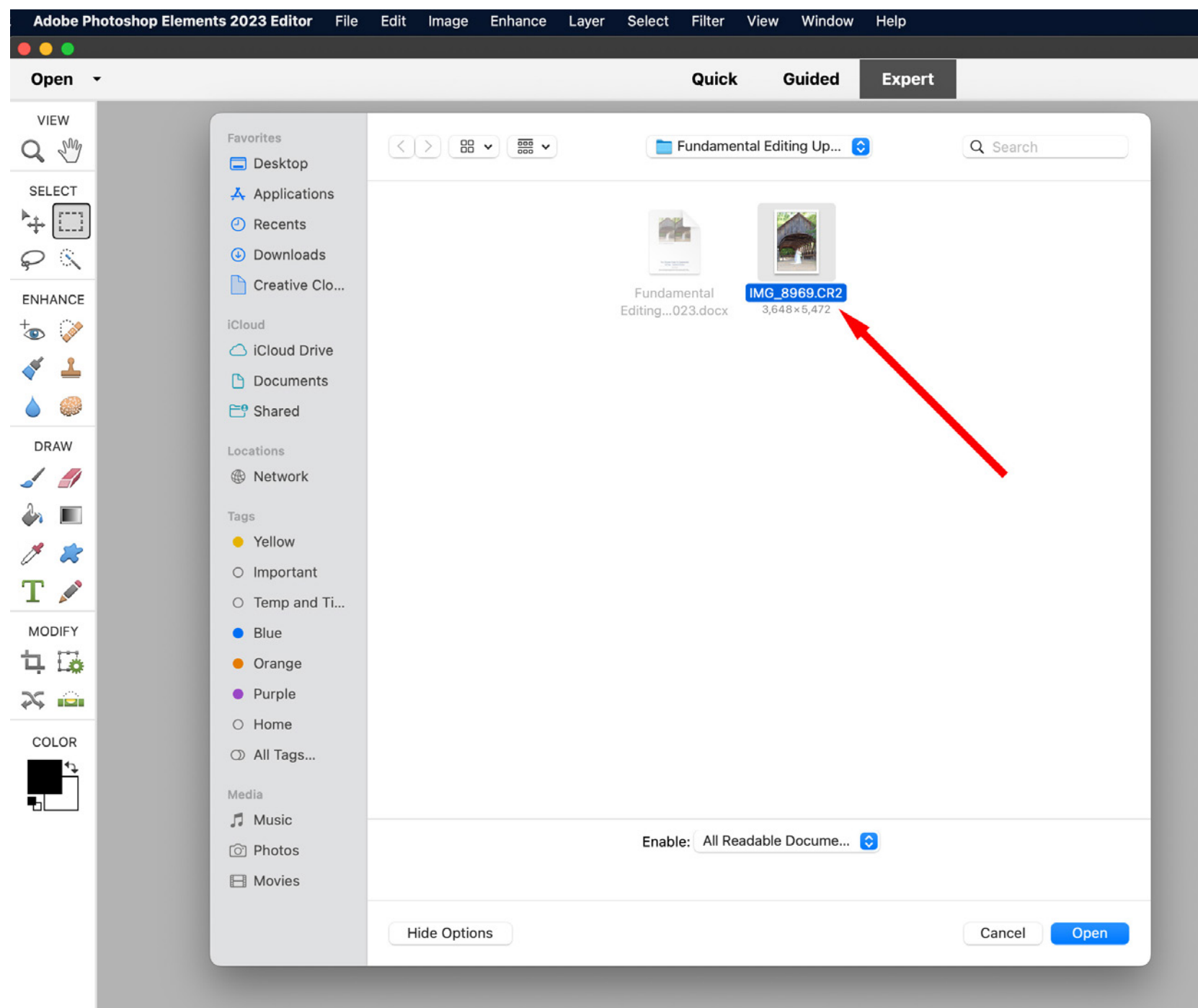


106 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault



107 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

- You want to be in the 'Expert' mode.
- Select 'File' and then select 'Open in Camera Raw.'



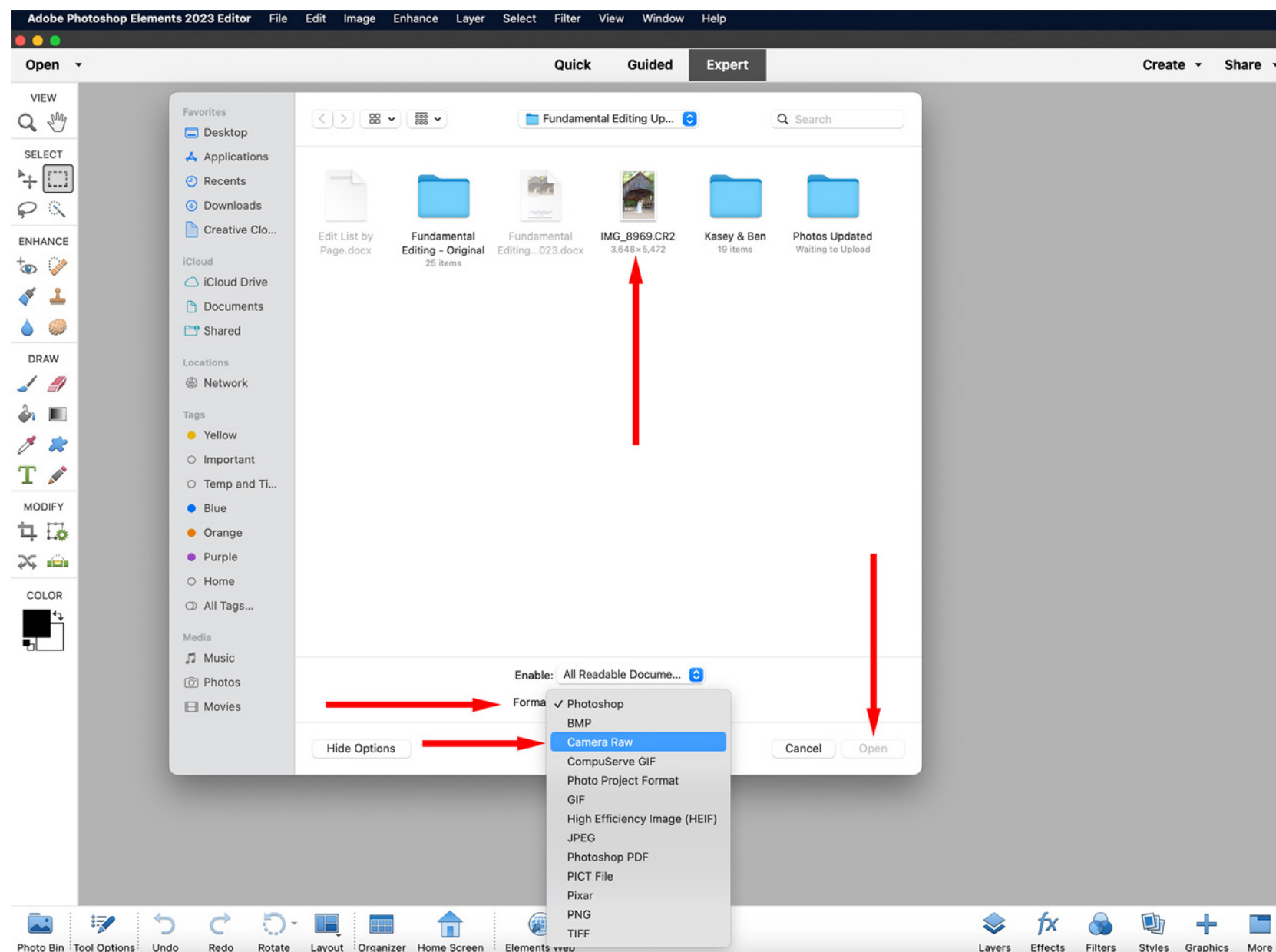
108 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 108, you will see that the 'Open in Camera Raw' Navigation box has appeared. Navigate to your file. If possible, you always want to work on the RAW file. This would be indicated by the file extension at the end of the file name.

Key Lesson: If you primarily shoot camera RAW files or RAW and .JPEG combined, you can make it easier to locate your RAW files. Go down to the dropdown titled 'Enable.' Change the setting from 'All Readable Documents' to 'Camera Raw.' This will limit the available files for you to open to just the camera RAW files.

Additionally, if you would rather just select the 'Open' function instead of the 'Open in Camera Raw' function, you can set that up.

Close the bridal portrait file. Go back up to the 'File' dropdown menu, only this time select 'Open.'

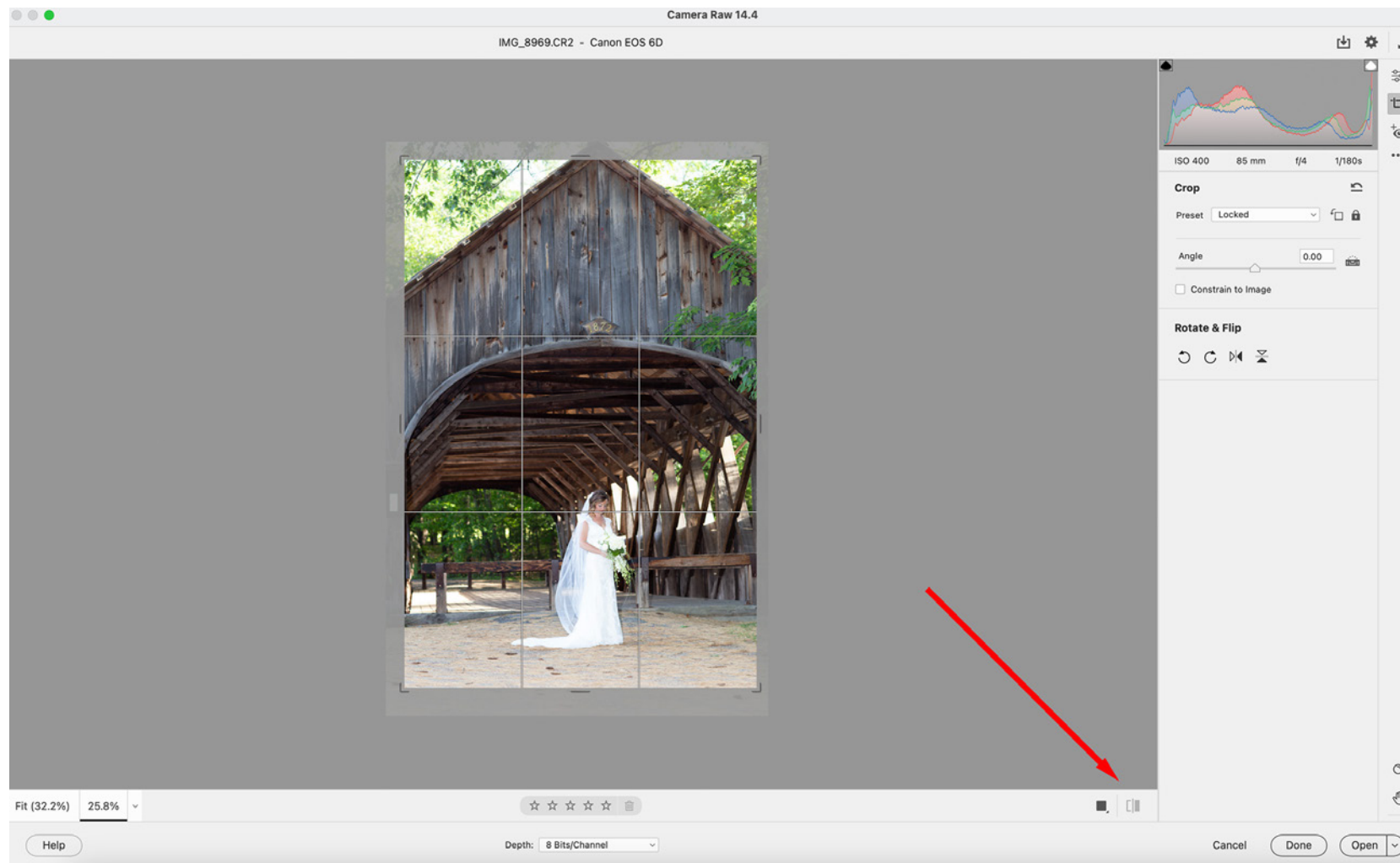


109 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

When the 'Open' navigation box appears, navigate to the 'Format' dropdown menu. Open it and click on 'Camera Raw.'

Select the file that you wish to open. If it is in the camera RAW format, the 'Open' radio button will be highlighted.

The problem with this method is that it always defaults to its nominal settings, which means you must do this every time. However, it's helpful to know this; if you're already in this window looking for a file and decide to open it in camera RAW, you don't have to close everything up and start over. Also, in this option, you can open any type of file. The Open in Camera Raw option only allows you to open camera RAW files.



110 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

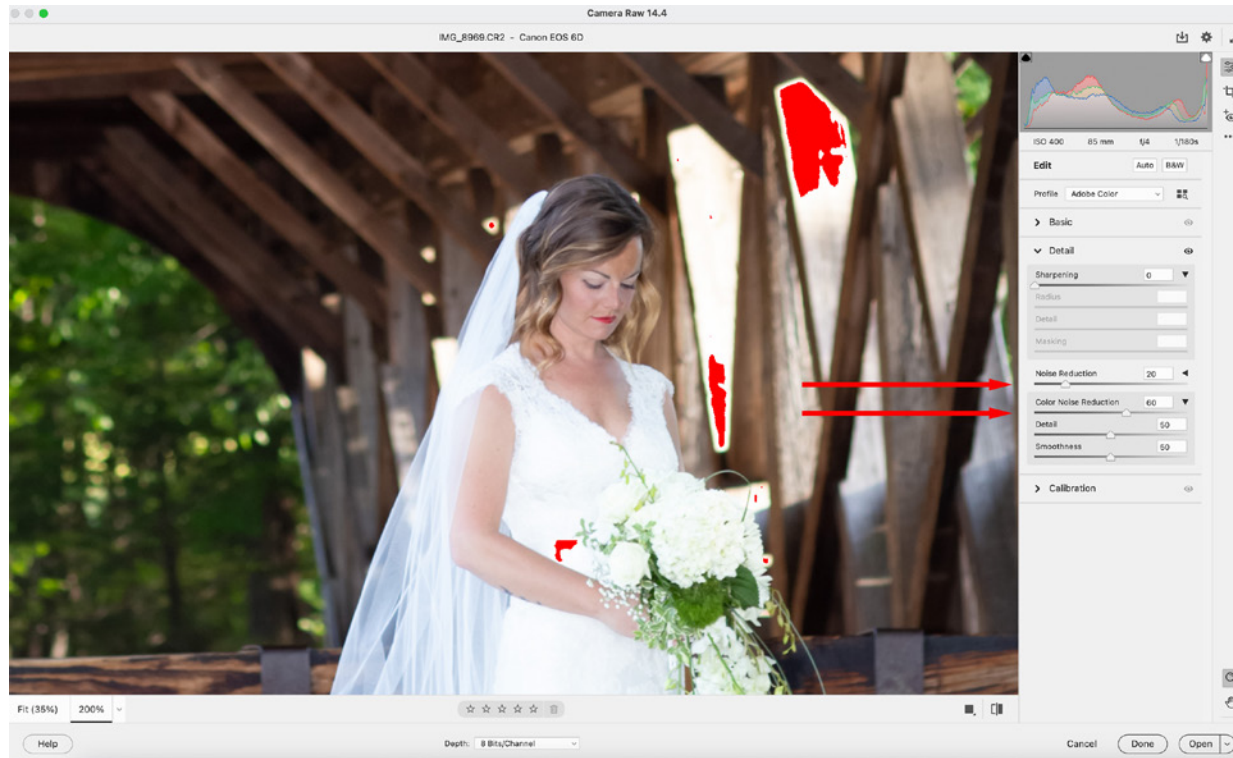
Step Two – Crop the Image

Like Photoshop, Elements users will complete most of their Fundamental Editing List within the Camera Raw Processing Window. For Elements, though, not all of the steps can be completed in the Camera Raw Processing Window. I'll explain why when we get to that point. The Camera Raw Processing Window for both software packages is very similar. Elements just has fewer tools to work with.

The 'Crop' tool works similarly to Photoshop, with one exception. The only available overlay in Elements is the Rule of Thirds grid. You can turn that Overlay on and off by pressing the 'v' key. **(Read the Photoshop Section, please.)**

The Crop toolbox is the same as the Photoshop version. Go read that section for a more in-depth description of this critical step.

On the lower right of the preview window are two icons that allow you to change the Preview window to display a 'Before and After' view.



111 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Step Three – Noise Reduction

The noise reduction process using the Camera Raw Processing Window was discussed thoroughly in the Photoshop section.

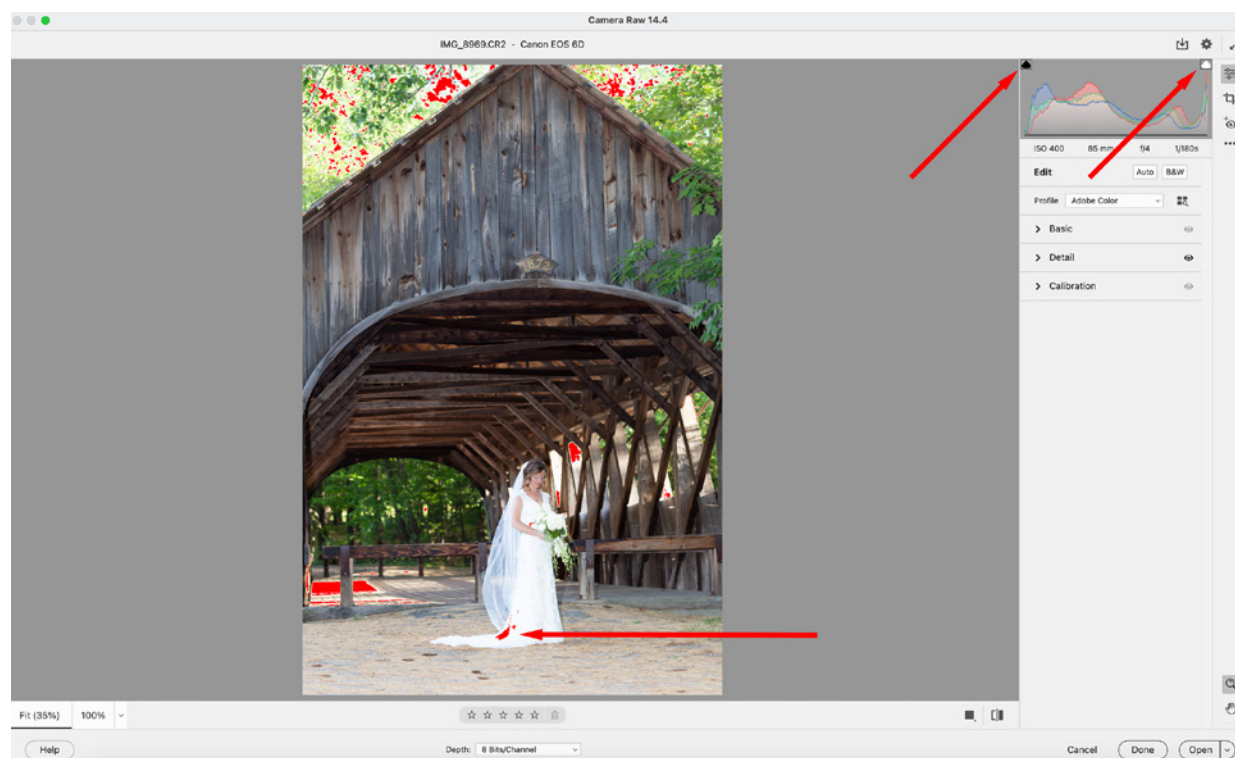
Reducing Chromatic (Color) noise was discussed in the Lightroom section.

Review those sections if you skipped them before proceeding.

Review the following steps for Reference 111.

- Set your Preview to 200%.

- Navigate the Preview image to areas of visible noise, giving special attention to your main subject.
- The Noise Reduction settings are located in the 'Detail' dropdown menu.
- Make sure the Sharpening slider is set to 25.
- Chromatic noise should be dealt with first. The Color Noise Reduction sliders eliminate Chromatic (color) noise. By default, they will open at 25, 50, and 50. These settings eliminate most Chromatic noise. If you don't see any Chromatic noise, leave them there. If you still see Chromatic noise, read the Lightroom section. If you don't know what Chromatic noise is, read the Photoshop section. The only chromatic slider that I move is the Color Noise Reduction. The Detail and Smoothness sliders have minimal visible effects to my eyes.
- For the bridal portrait, I raised the Color Noise Reduction slider to 60, as I saw color noise in the wood areas of the bridge.
- To eliminate Luminance (tonal) noise, slowly raise the Noise Reduction slider until the visible noise disappears. I saw luminance noise in the bridal portrait in the bride's skin and hair. My Noise Reduction setting ended up at 20.
- Return the Sharpening slider to 0, as we will address sharpening later in the Fundamental Editing List.



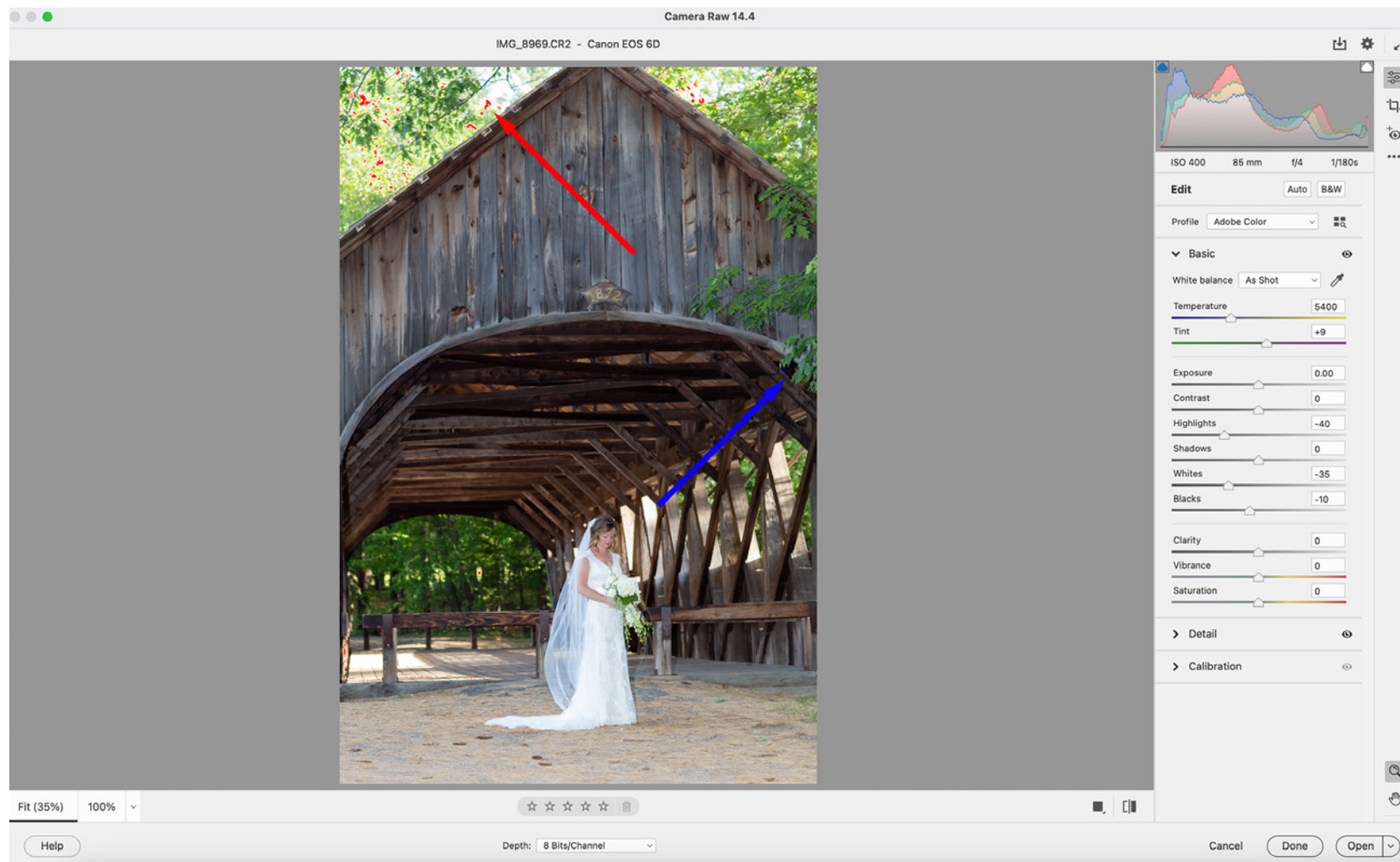
112 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Steps Four, Five, & Six – Global Exposure Adjustment, Clipping, and Setting the Black Point and White Point

These steps in Elements work precisely like Photoshop, with one exception. The Clipping Indicator icons at the top of the Histogram are turned on when they have a black box around them instead of a white box, as in the Photoshop version. If you skipped the Photoshop section, go back and read it, as these essential steps are covered in detail there.

I'm going to hammer home a couple of vital points regarding the Exposure steps.

- Learn to read the Histogram.
- Always make sure that your clipping indicators are turned on. The two upper right red arrows pointing toward the Histogram show the Clipping Indicators. The left triangular shape is the shadow-clipping indicator. The right triangular shape is the highlight clipping indicator. You can tell when they are turned on because a very difficult-to-see little black box will appear around the triangular-shaped icon. If there is clipping in the highlights, it will appear as a red mask over the Preview image. If there is Black clipping in the shadows, it will appear as a blue mask over the preview image.
- Use the Clipping Indicators to help set the White Point and Black Point.
- Unless your Histogram is hugely biased to one end or the other, try to make your Global Exposure Adjustments using only the Highlights, Shadows, Whites, and Blacks sliders.
- By adjusting those four settings, ideally your Histogram will have a flowing, gentle, up and down curvy view (such as in Reference 112). The Histogram will not be 'cut off (Clipped)' on either end.
- Adjust the highlights and shadows until just a tiny bit of the clipping indicator (on both ends - shadows and highlights) are visible. This sets your White Point and Black Point.



113 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 113, the blue arrow shows a tiny bit of Shadow Clipping in the deep shadows of the bridge, and the upper left-facing red arrow pointing toward the sky indicates a little bit of highlight clipping.

I went into quite a bit of detail on setting the Black Point and White Point in the Photoshop section. Refer to that for more information.

The short version is that you don't want any clipping in and around your subject. The clipping you leave or create for the White Point and Black Point should be in a non-important area within the frame.

- Read the Photoshop section to understand setting the Contrast. For this photograph, I set the Contrast to +15.

Steps Seven & Eight – Color Temperature & Color Tint

Review the Photoshop section for detailed information on the White Balance, Temperature and Tint sliders. Then return here to move along.

Reference 114 shows how I have set up my workspace to adjust the Temperature and Tint using Elements.

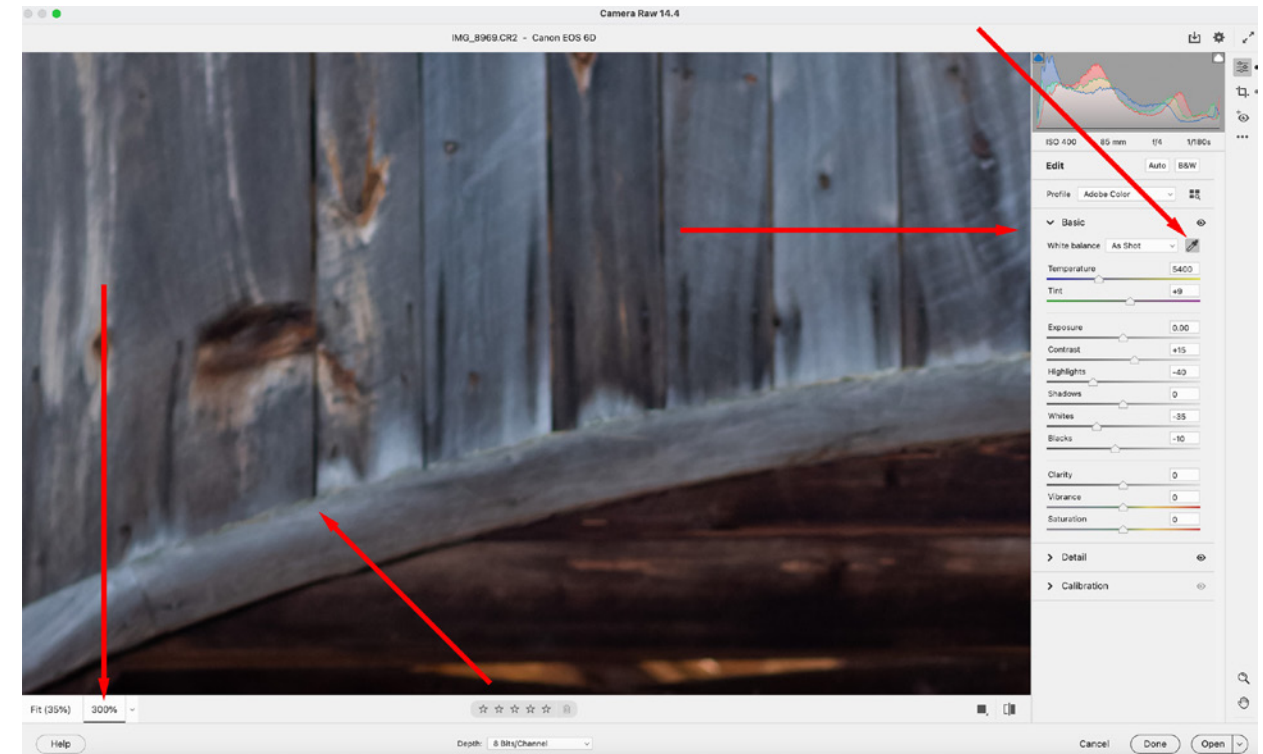
If you read the Photoshop section, you'll notice that I'm not doing it the same way, even though the controls are the same.

I did this to illustrate a point.

Unless you go into a great deal of trouble, the color Temperature and Tint settings are very subjective. Using the method I will describe here will yield slightly different results than what I described in the Photoshop section. However, both versions look fine.

Pro Tip: Here is a key step to becoming a better photographer and Post-Production Editor. Develop a system and stick to it. That is the whole basis of having a Fundamental Editing List – repeatability and consistent results!

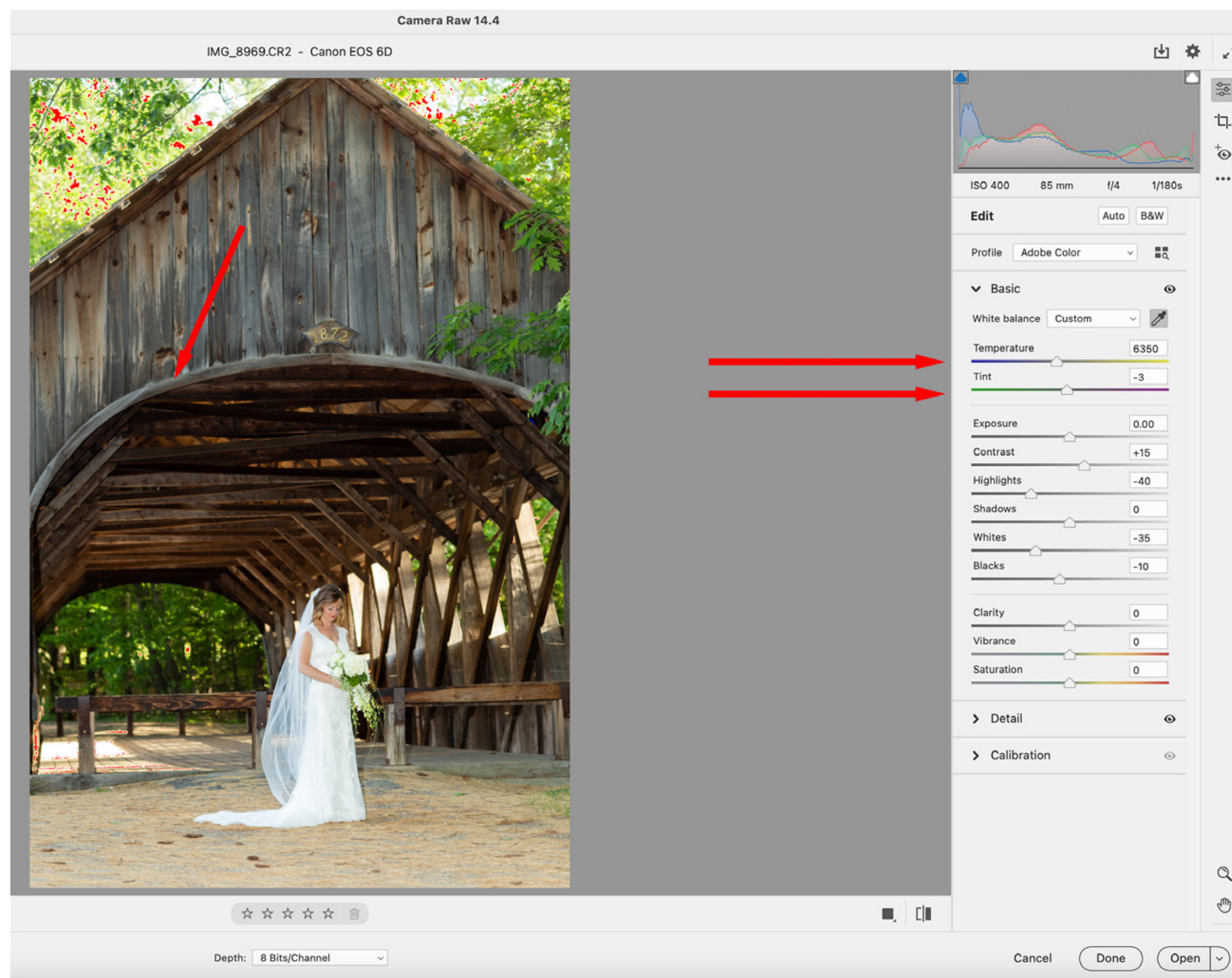
In the Photoshop section, I took my sample from a 'Fit' preview of the photograph. In the Elements section, I'm taking my sample from a 300% picture preview. What was the difference? The 300% preview gives a smaller sample section. Is either method perfectly correct, or is the other one wrong? No. Like I said in the Photoshop section, the only time that 100% accurate



114 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

color becomes an issue is when you take on paying jobs with clients that require it. For example, don't shoot a Coke-a-Cola ad and deliver an image with too much yellow in the reds.

So, in Reference 114, the far-left arrow shows that I have set the Preview Window to 300%. The arrow pointing toward the highlighted box on the upper right shows the White Balance tool's location. The second arrow from the left shows where I took my sample using the White Balance tool. The second arrow from the right shows that the White Balance tools are located in the Basic toolbox.

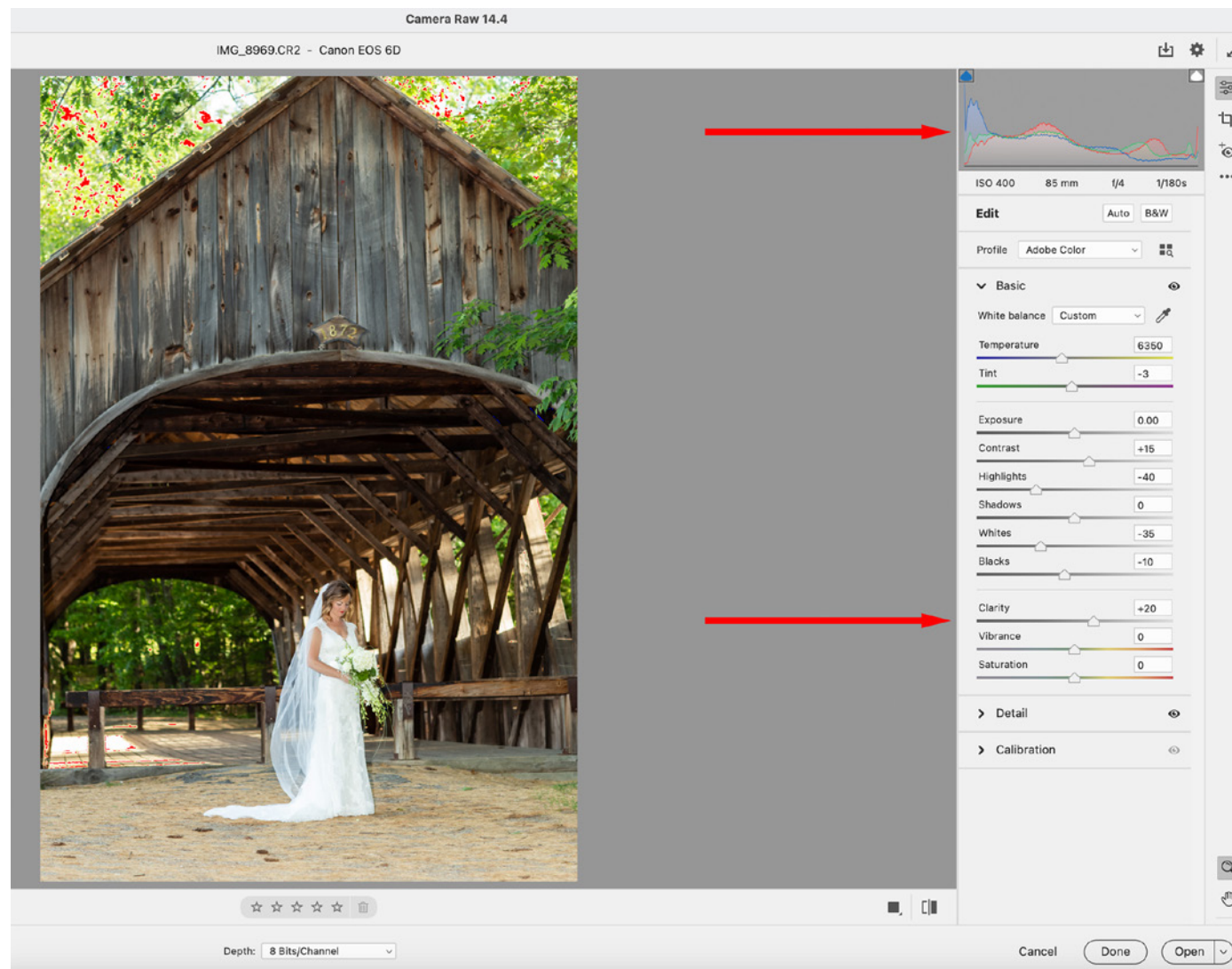


In Reference 115, you can see that the Temperature and Tint sliders have readjusted after a left click of the White Balance tool on my sample area. Visually, it's easy to see how much blue was removed, thus warming up the photograph nicely! Compare References 114 and 116.

115 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Self-Check Quiz

1. True or False: There is no way to open a .JPEG file into the Camera Raw Processing Window in Adobe Elements.
2. True or False: If I click the 'File' dropdown menu and then select 'Open,' there is no way for me to do my Fundamental Editing List in the Camera Raw Processing Window.
3. True or False: Unlike Photoshop, the Crop tool within the Elements version of the Camera Raw Processing Window permanently crops my image.
4. When setting the Noise Reduction, I should reduce the _____ noise first and then reduce the _____ noise second.
5. When do you know the Clipping indicators are on?
6. In Elements, I will use the _____ to help me set my White Point and my Black Point.
7. True or False: Setting the Temperature and Tint is an exacting process.
8. I should be aware when one, or both, Clipping indicators do what?



116 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Step Nine – Clarity

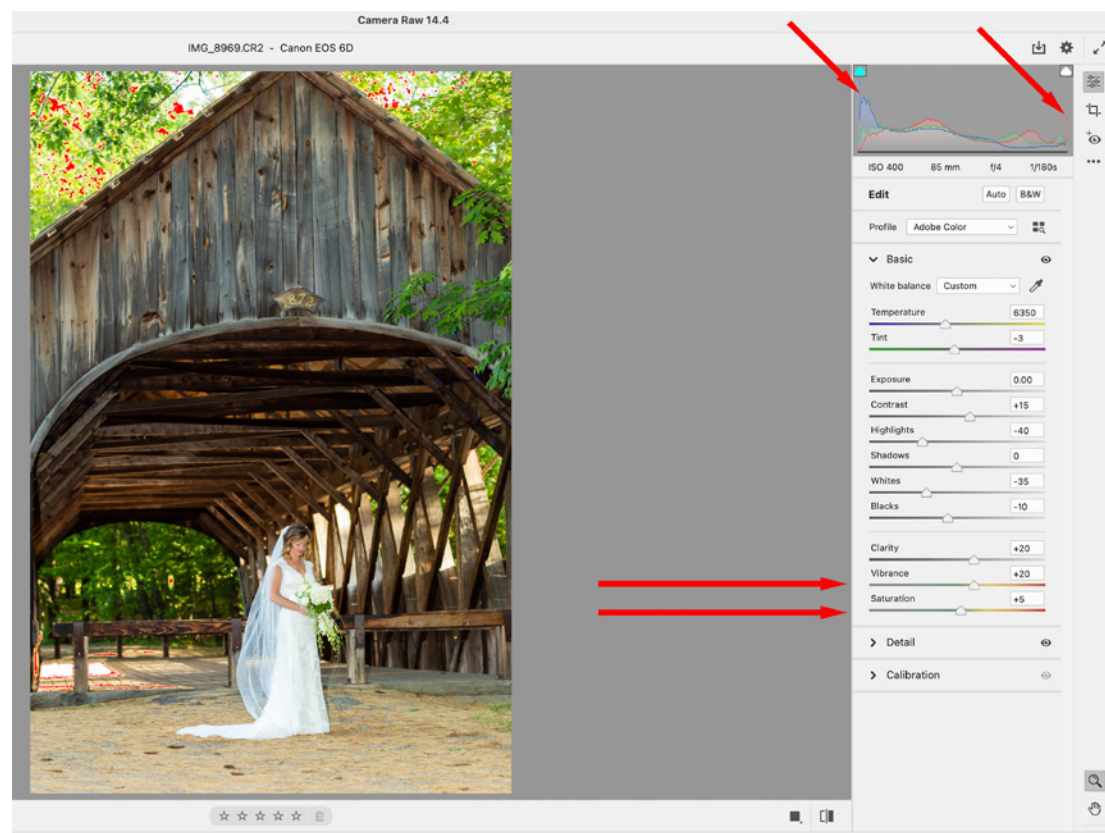
Clarity is one of those settings that has no right or wrong answer. Plus, the 'good' setting will vary widely based on the particular photograph and your intent for the final look of that photograph.

Check out the Photoshop and Lightroom sections for more information about the Clarity setting.

I felt that the ideal Clarity setting for this bridal portrait was +20. How did I come to that conclusion? By adjusting the slider back and forth while watching the Histogram and the Preview image. Not too exacting, huh? That's just the way it is.

This is what you need to know about the Clarity setting.

- Increased Clarity creates the visual illusion of adding depth and sharpness.
- It does this by adding more contrast in the mid-tones.
- Increase or decrease the Clarity setting too far, and you'll begin to create clipping.
- While increasing the Clarity setting increases the visual effect of sharpness, it doesn't add noise. So, it's essential to complete this step before doing the image Sharpening step (which is one of the reasons why Sharpening is last on the Fundamental Editing List).



117 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Steps Ten & Eleven – Vibrance & Saturation

Be sure to read the earlier sections regarding these critical steps in the Fundamental Editing List.

Vibrance and Saturation, particularly Saturation, are two of the most misunderstood and overly abused adjustments in post-production.

A heavy hand on these adjustments (particularly Saturation) can quickly create image quality problems.

Yes, I know that sometimes photographers over-saturate colors to create an effect, and whether that effect is considered successful or not is up to personal taste.

However, when adjusting Vibrance and Saturation, you should ask yourself, 'Do I want the color of this photo to BE the subject? Or do I want the color to be a PART of the subject?' If you create a landscape photograph and then over-saturate the blue sky, the sky becomes so visually dominant that it takes over the picture. You might as well just be shooting a picture of just the sky.

Reference 117 shows that I decided on a Vibrance setting of +20 and a Saturation setting of +5.

The upper right red arrow indicates that the Highlight and Shadow clipping has increased. This is a situation where you must look at the Preview image and use your visual judgment. It's easy to see where the Highlight clipping is happening, and it's not a problem in the trees and sky, just as long as we have no clipping on the bride and her dress.

There's a hefty amount of Shadow clipping on the blue channel. That's occurring in the shadowed forest area beyond the bridge. Again, after a visual check, it looks fine, and we can move on.

Step Twelve – Effects/Vignette

Steps twelve through fourteen for Elements users are where the program falls a little short for you. You must now open your image within the program to complete those steps. That means no Brush tool in the Camera Raw Processing Window.

Because of that, we will do a loop-de-loop and complete step fifteen before we exit the Camera Raw Processing Window. Remember, we want to accomplish as much as possible in the Camera Raw Processing Window so that we can undo our changes later if we want to.

I'm also not very fond of how steps thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen are accomplished within Elements. There are limitations to each of those functions.

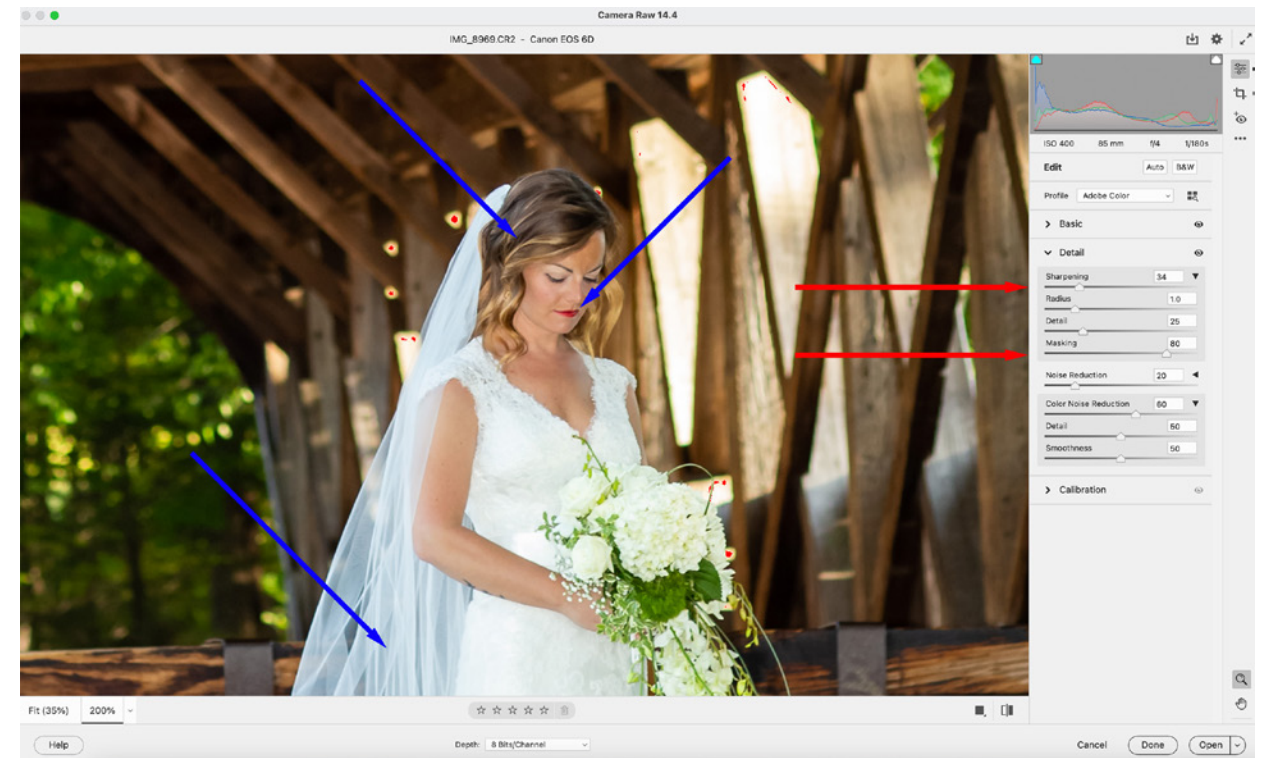
Still... I'm going to walk you through it.

WE ARE JUMPING AHEAD TO STEP FIFTEEN!

Step Fifteen – Global Sharpening

Hopefully, you read the previous Photoshop and Lightroom sections regarding Sharpening. Look at Reference 118 while reading the following bullet points to remember.

- You want your Preview image to be set at 200%.
- You want to adjust your preview image to look at the most critical part of your subject: the part that should be the



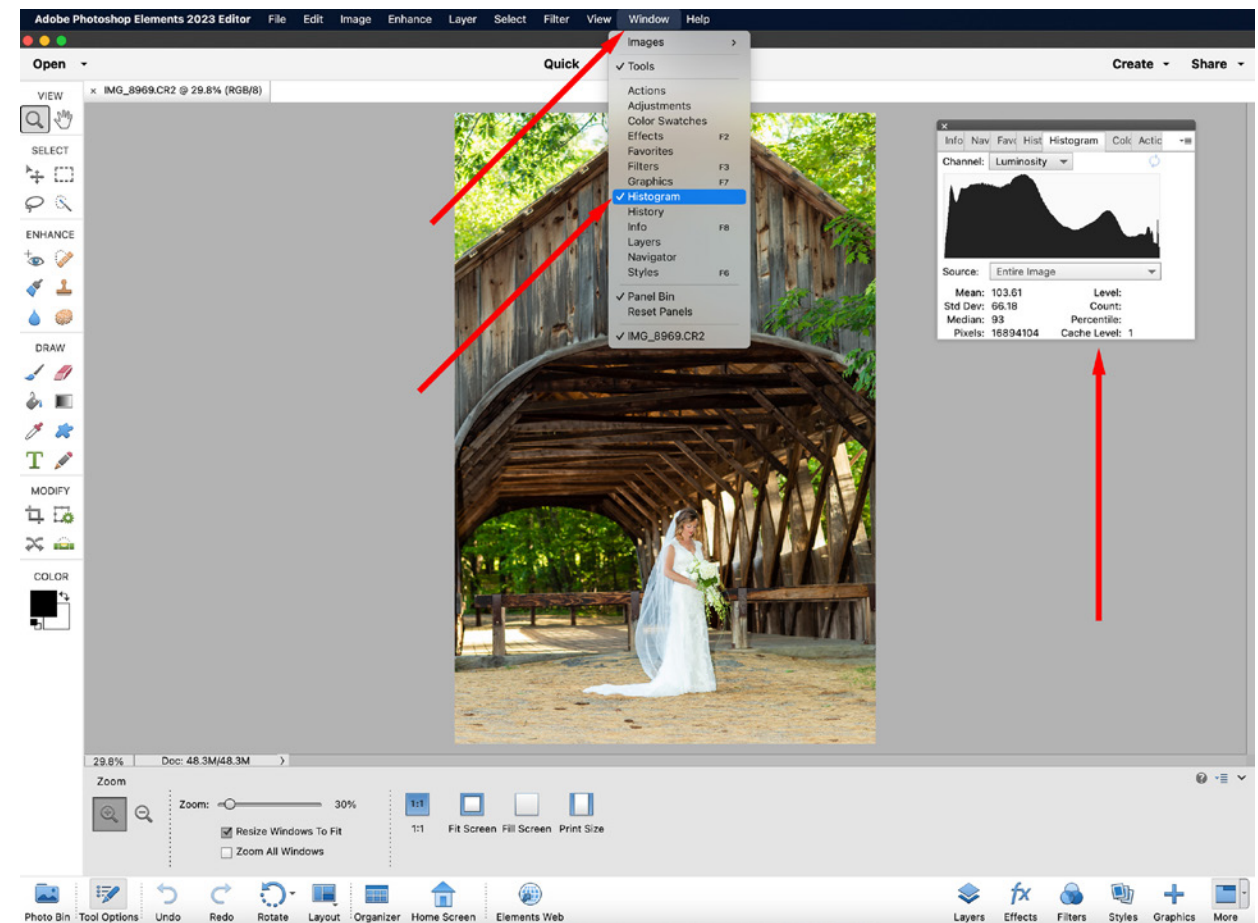
118 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

sharpest. In the case of this photo, it is the bride's hair, face, veil, dress, and flowers.

- Click the 'Detail' dropdown menu to see the 'Sharpening' tools.
- Increase the 'Sharpening' until your chosen subject area looks sharp.
- Go light. Under-sharpening is better than over-sharpening.
- Hold down the 'option' key ('alt' for PC) while increasing the 'Masking' slider until only the essential edge details are being sharpened.

 **Key Lesson:** Sharpening is an often-abused post-production edit. I want to clarify something for you. The Sharpening function is not intended to bring sharpness to a soft, fuzzy, poorly shot original file. Digital cameras create a *slightly* softened image to help eliminate a phenomenon called 'moiré.' Your original image files should look close to sharp. This bridal portrait was critically focused, with the camera on a tripod, using a very high-quality lens. Yet, it needs **a little sharpening** to restore exact detail. Focus on that phrase, a **little sharpening**. Trying to create sharpness in a poorly shot photograph leads to awful images that look amateurish. Don't do this. Practice good shooting skills. Practice being a good photo editor and throwing the bad shots out. Sharpen your images lightly.

WE ARE NOW RETURNING TO STEPS TWELVE THROUGH FOURTEEN!

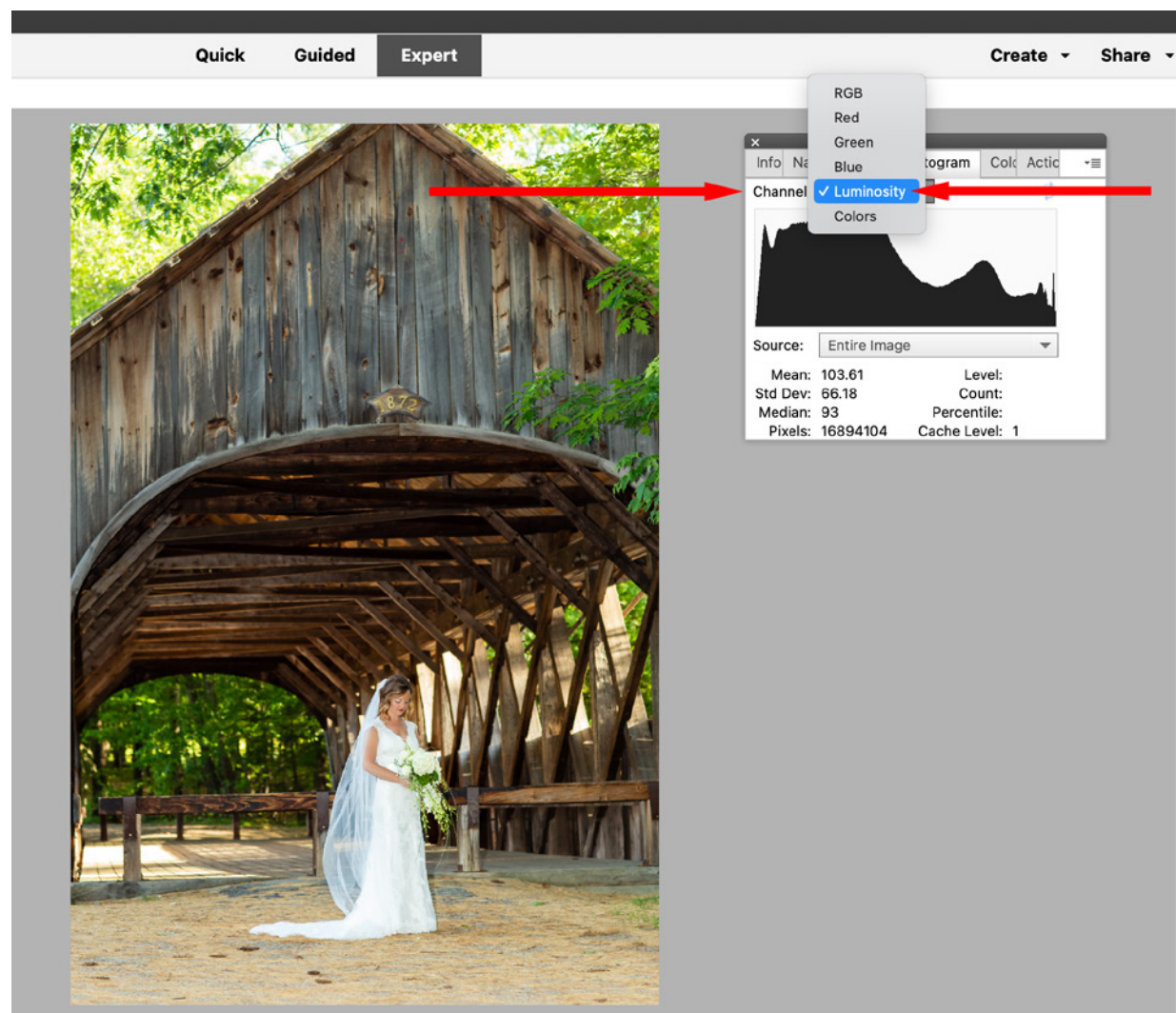


119 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Before we can proceed, we must open the image in Elements.

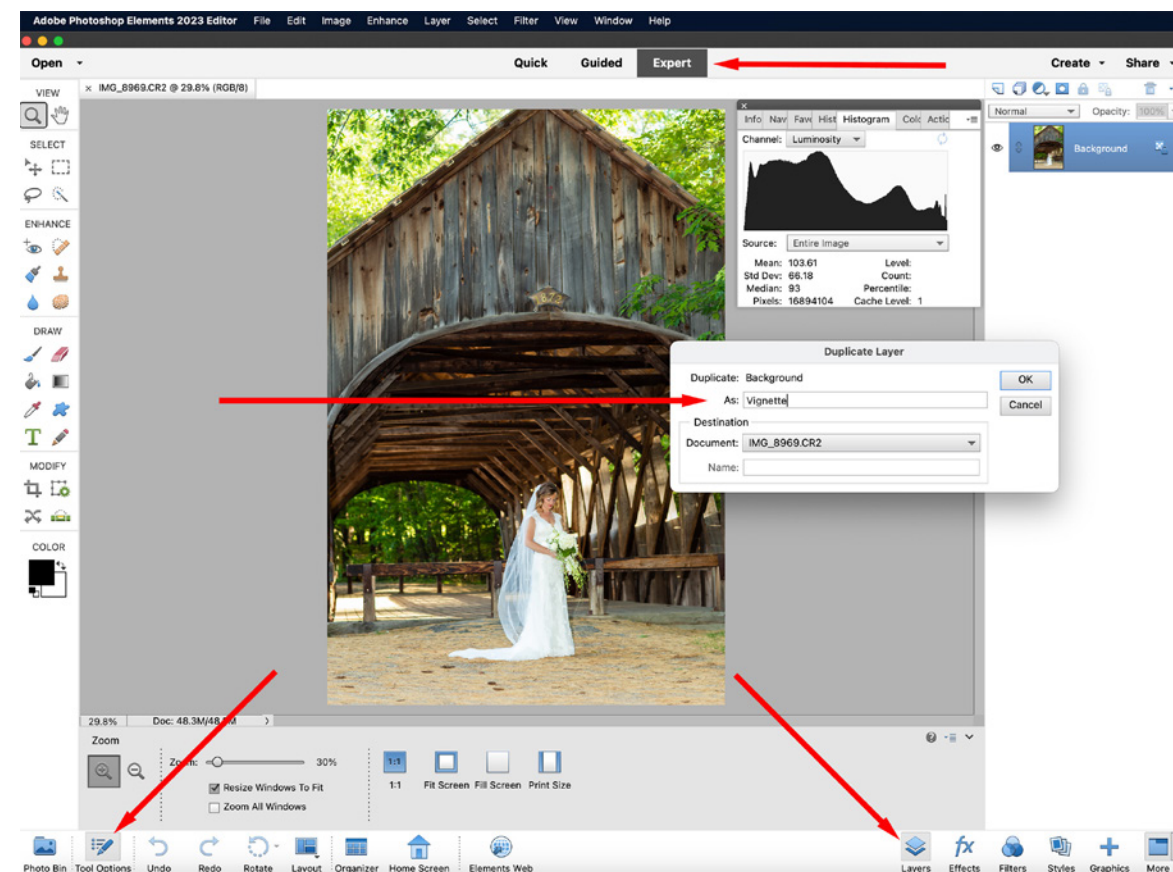
Click the 'Open' radio button in the lower-right corner of the Camera Raw Processing Window workspace.

Go to the 'Window' dropdown menu and select Histogram. Make sure that the Histogram is now visible on the workspace.



120 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

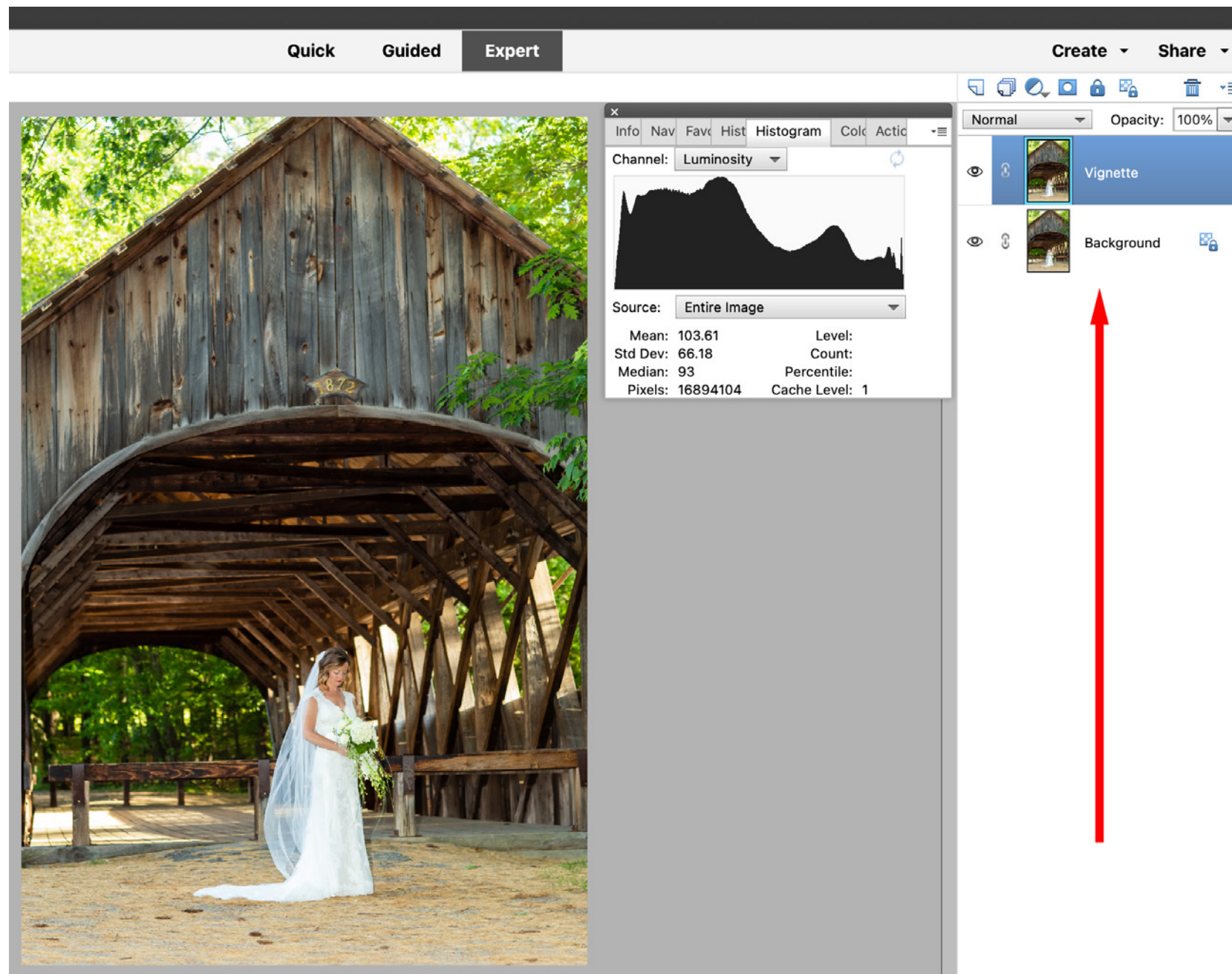
Once we are done with our color adjustments, I want you to set the Histogram to Luminosity. By doing so, our Histogram will only display tone values. You do this by opening the 'Channels' dropdown menu and making the selection.



121 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

When your image opens within Elements, I want you to do the following:

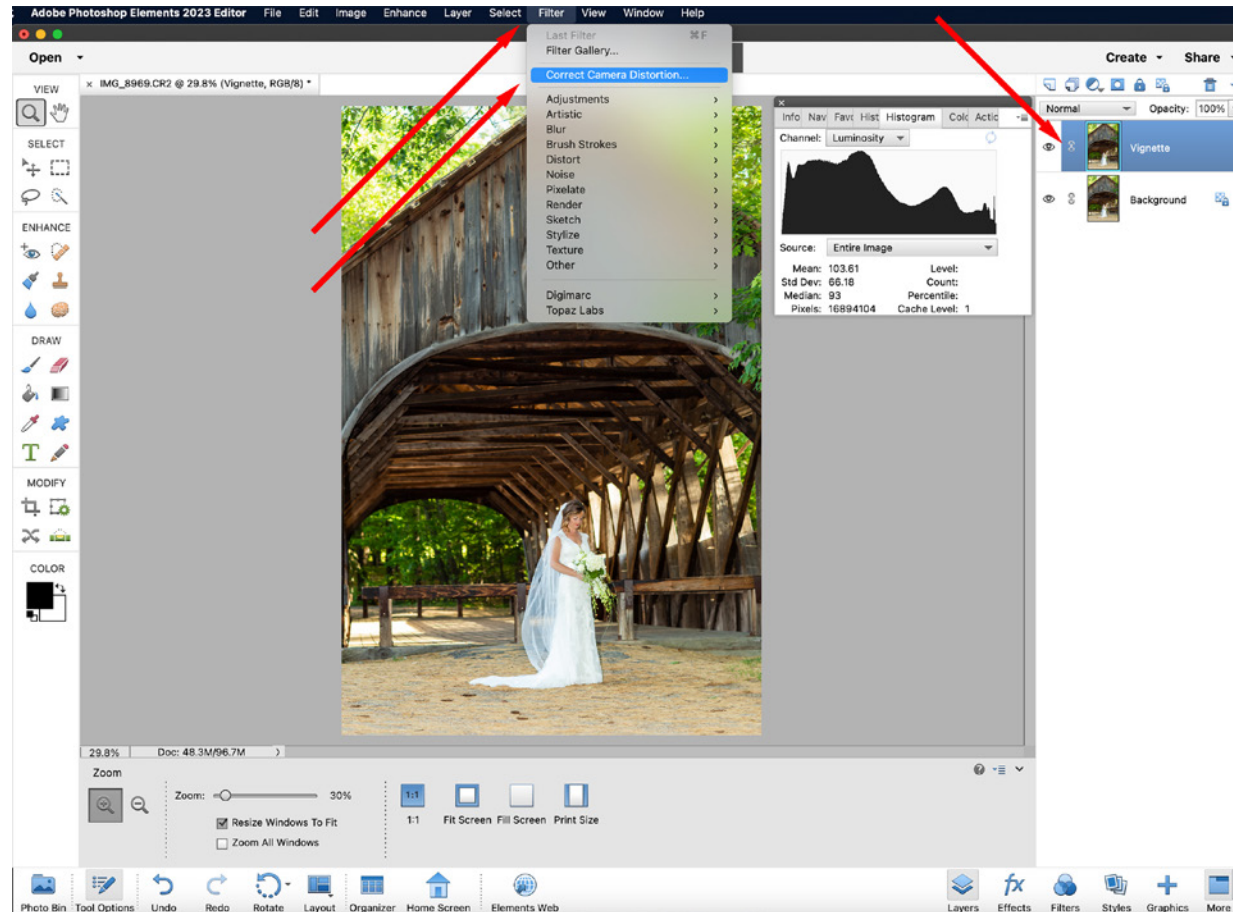
- Double-check that you are in 'Expert' mode.
- Ensure the 'Tool Options' radio button on the lower left is selected.
- Select the 'Layers' tab on the lower right.
- Right-click on the 'Background' layer.
- Select 'Duplicate Layer.'
- Name the new layer 'Vignette.'



We are now ready to move forward. We will complete our final steps of the Fundamental Editing List by creating a new layer for each step. Doing so preserves our original file at the bottom of the Layer stack, and each step will be on its own layer. When we go to save our work, if we save the file with layers as well as in a flattened version, we can. (We can undo some of what we did, should we happen to change our minds later.)

122 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

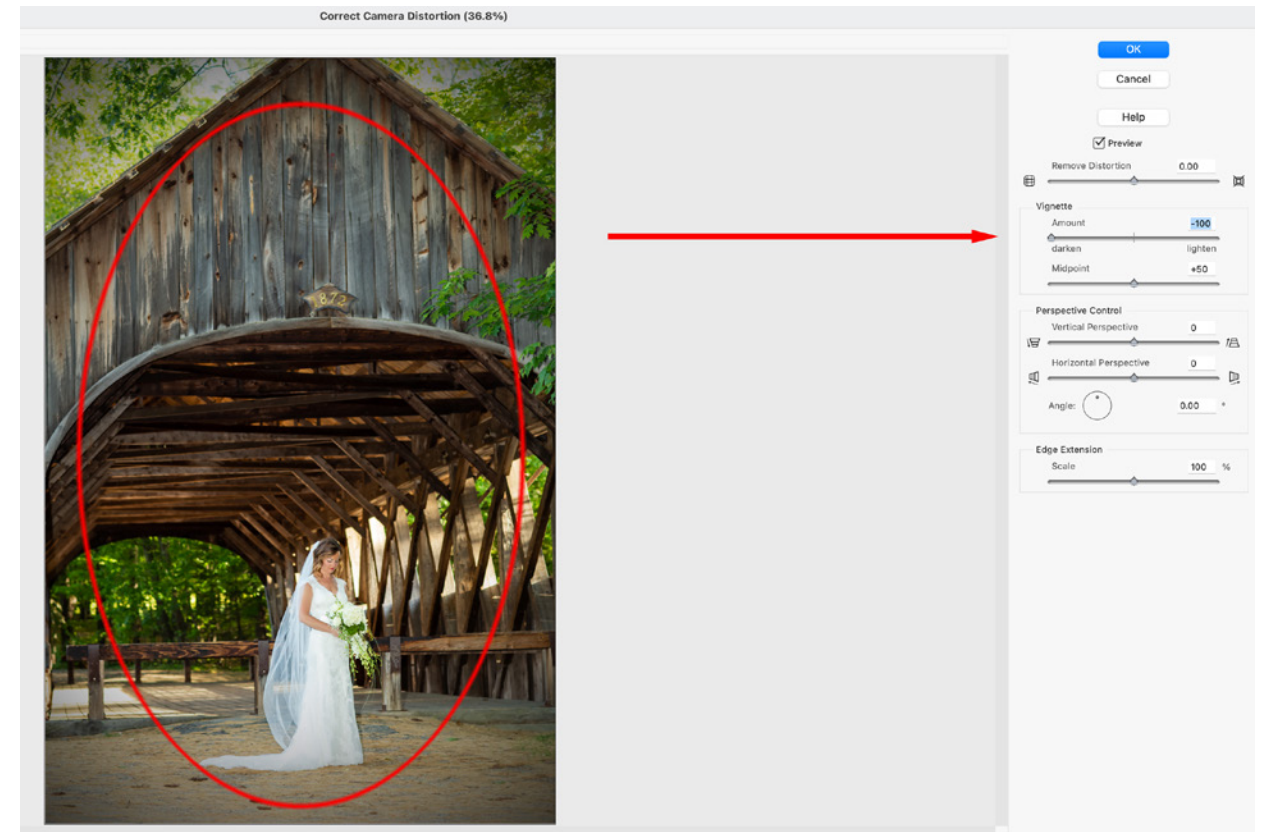
Step Twelve – Effects/Vignette



123 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

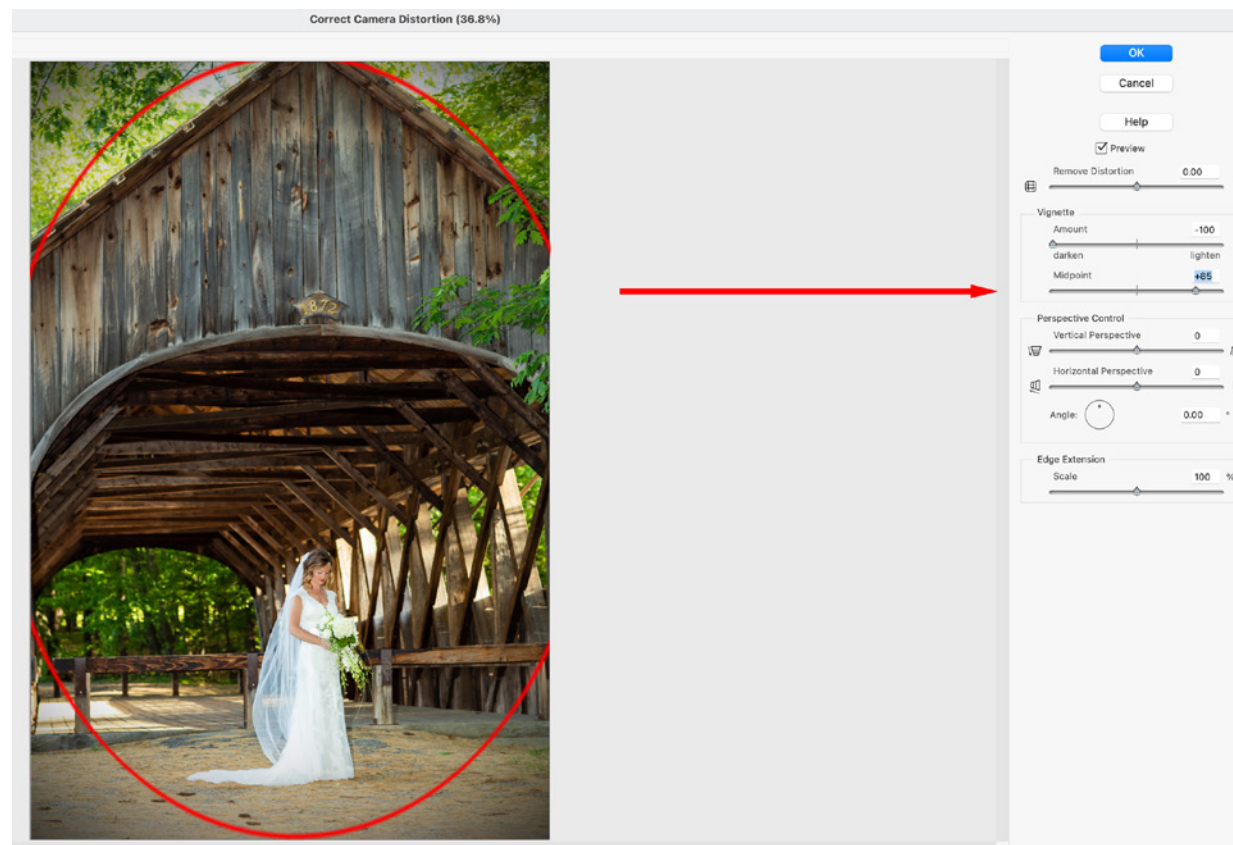
Follow these steps to place a vignette on our bridal portrait.

- Make sure the Vignette layer is selected.
- Go to the 'Filter' dropdown menu and select 'Correct Camera Distortion.'

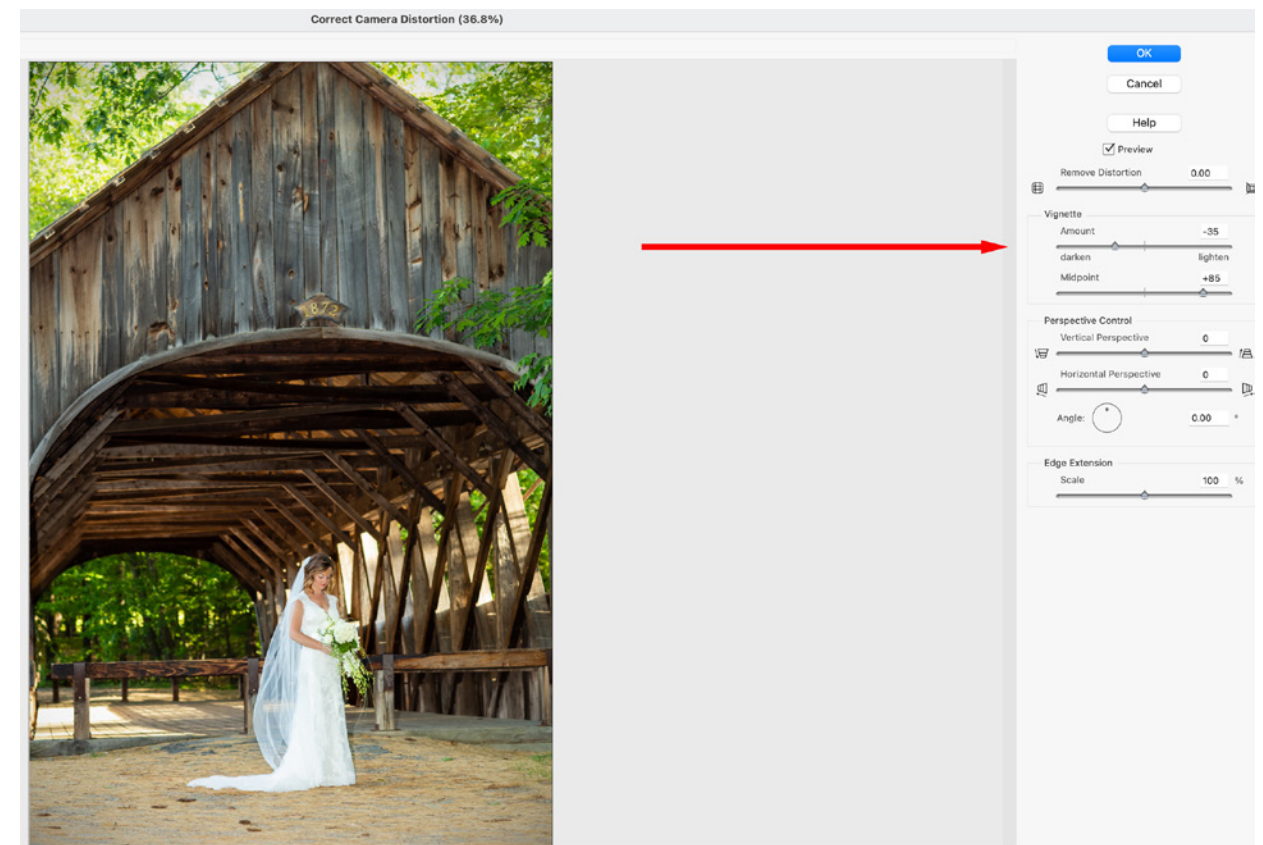


124 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

- Using the Vignette slider, reduce the 'Amount' to -100. This will give us the most accurate view of where the Vignette occurs. A primary difference between Elements and the other two programs in this guide is that Elements does not give you a feathering adjustment for the Vignette. Using Elements, I suggest going light with any Vignette you apply to any photograph.



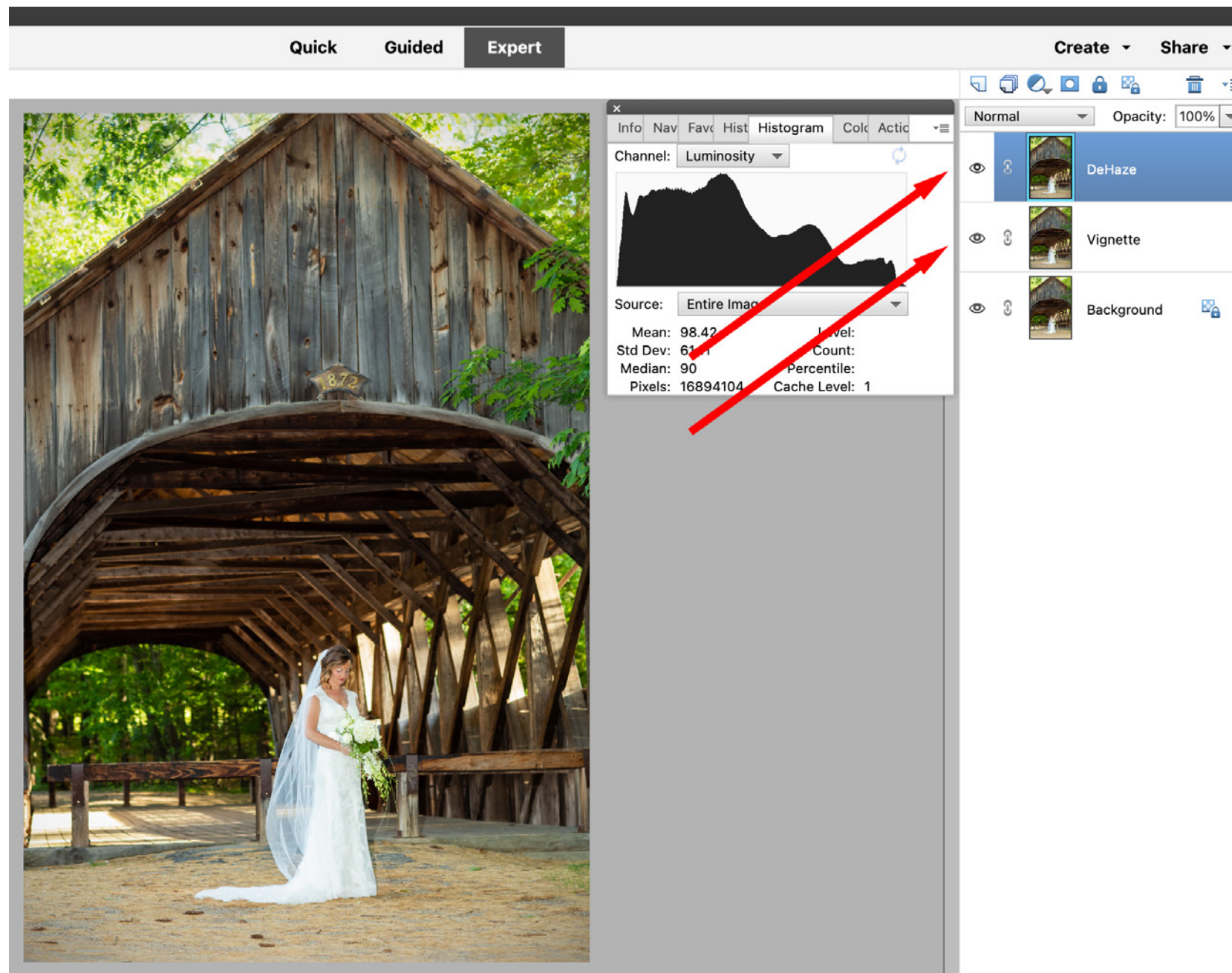
125 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault



126 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

- Increase the 'Midpoint' until the Vignette is only applied at the corners. Again, this is because we have no feathering options or the ability to bring the highlights back up to a more normal tonal value (see the Photoshop section).

- Increase the 'Amount' slider until you see the effect just slightly in the corners.
- Click 'Okay.'

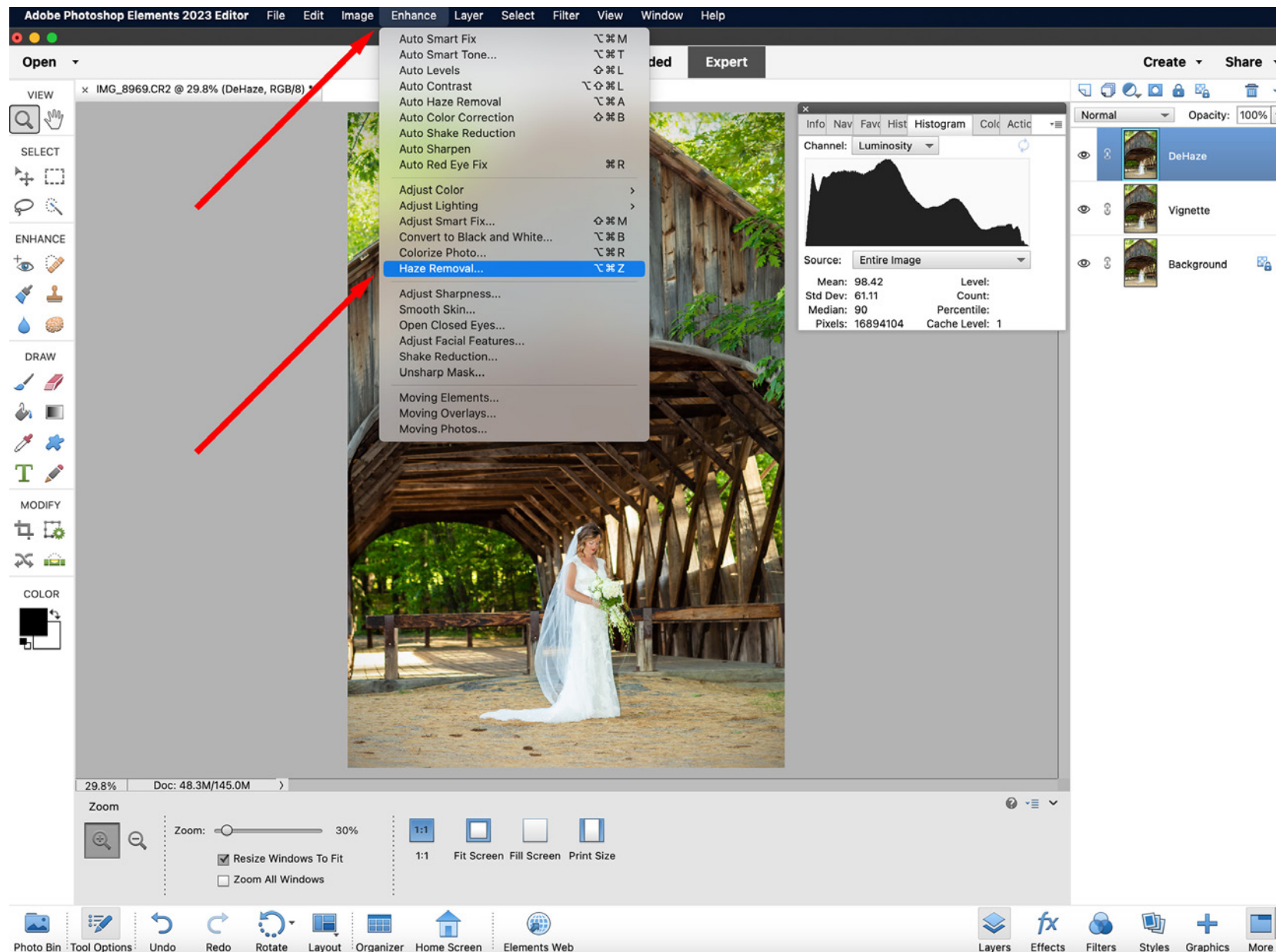


127 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Step Thirteen – Effects/Dehaze

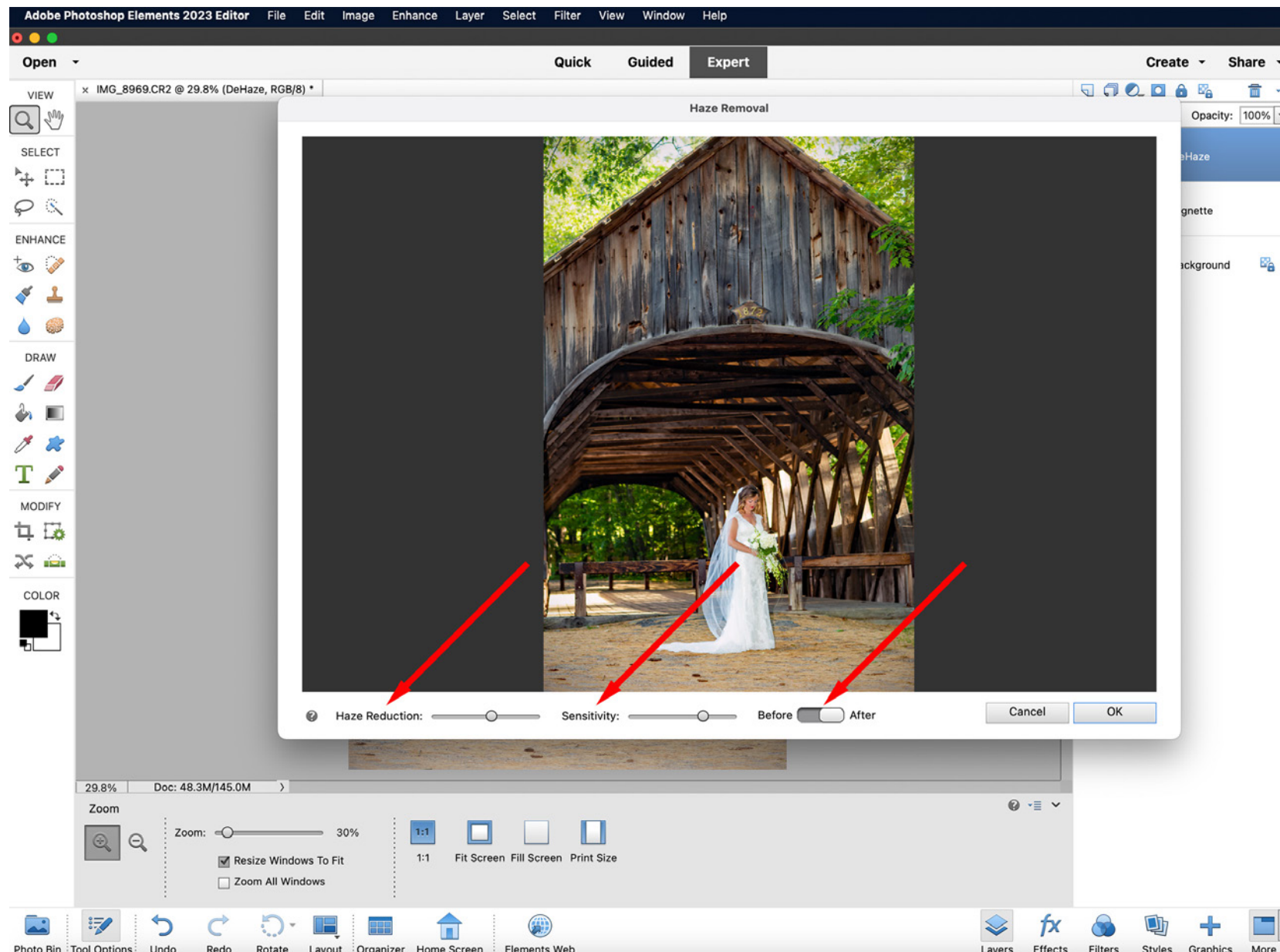
The Dehaze function has already been discussed thoroughly in the previous two sections. You're already aware that it doesn't apply to this particular photograph. However, I do want to make this one point.

In Reference 127, I want you to note (again) that each step is given its own layer. This is accomplished by simply duplicating the layer at the top of the stack as we move through these final steps in the Fundamental Editing List. Always name the new layer with the edit that you will perform on that layer. The Background Layer should always remain unchanged.



128 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

- If we were going to apply the Dehaze step, we would find it under the 'Enhance' menu where it is labeled 'Haze Removal.'



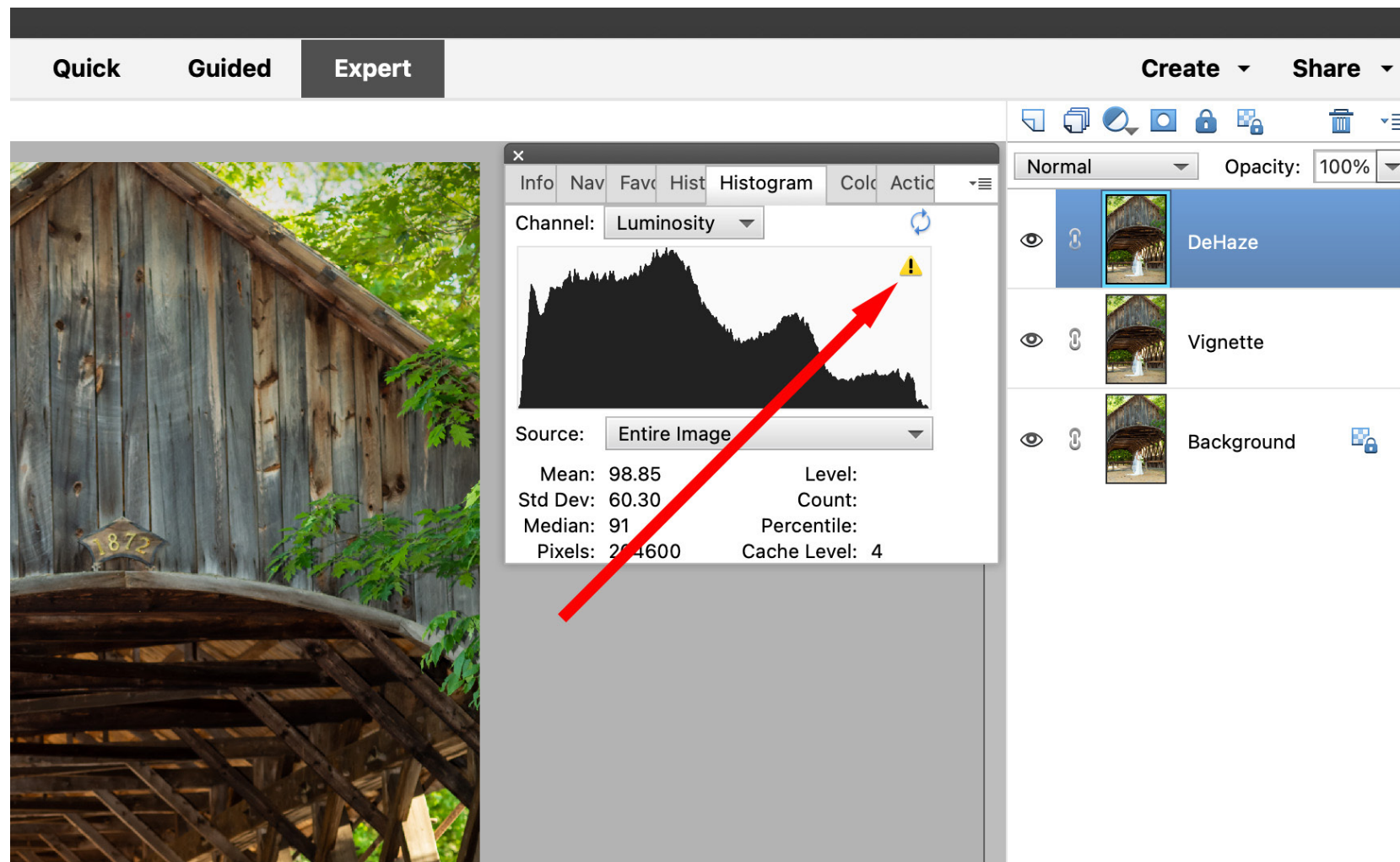
129 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Reference 129 depicts the limited controls for the Elements 'Haze Removal' function.

Unfortunately, the program doesn't give you a way to gauge how you're affecting the image other than with a visual check.

We learned earlier in the guide that the Dehaze function increases the contrast in areas that are detected by the software. There is also an 'Auto Haze Removal' function under the 'Enhance' dropdown menu as well. However, you know I'm not a fan of auto anything. The software doesn't have a brain like you do.

- The 'Haze Reduction' slider increases or decreases contrast in software-detected areas.
- The 'Sensitivity' slider controls where the software will apply the effect. Since there is no reference other than a visual check, it can be difficult to tell exactly what this setting is doing.
- The 'Before After' button toggles between the two preview images.



130 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

As you edit in Elements, you will occasionally notice a yellow warning icon that appears in the Histogram. This is merely telling you that your last edit changed the Histogram.

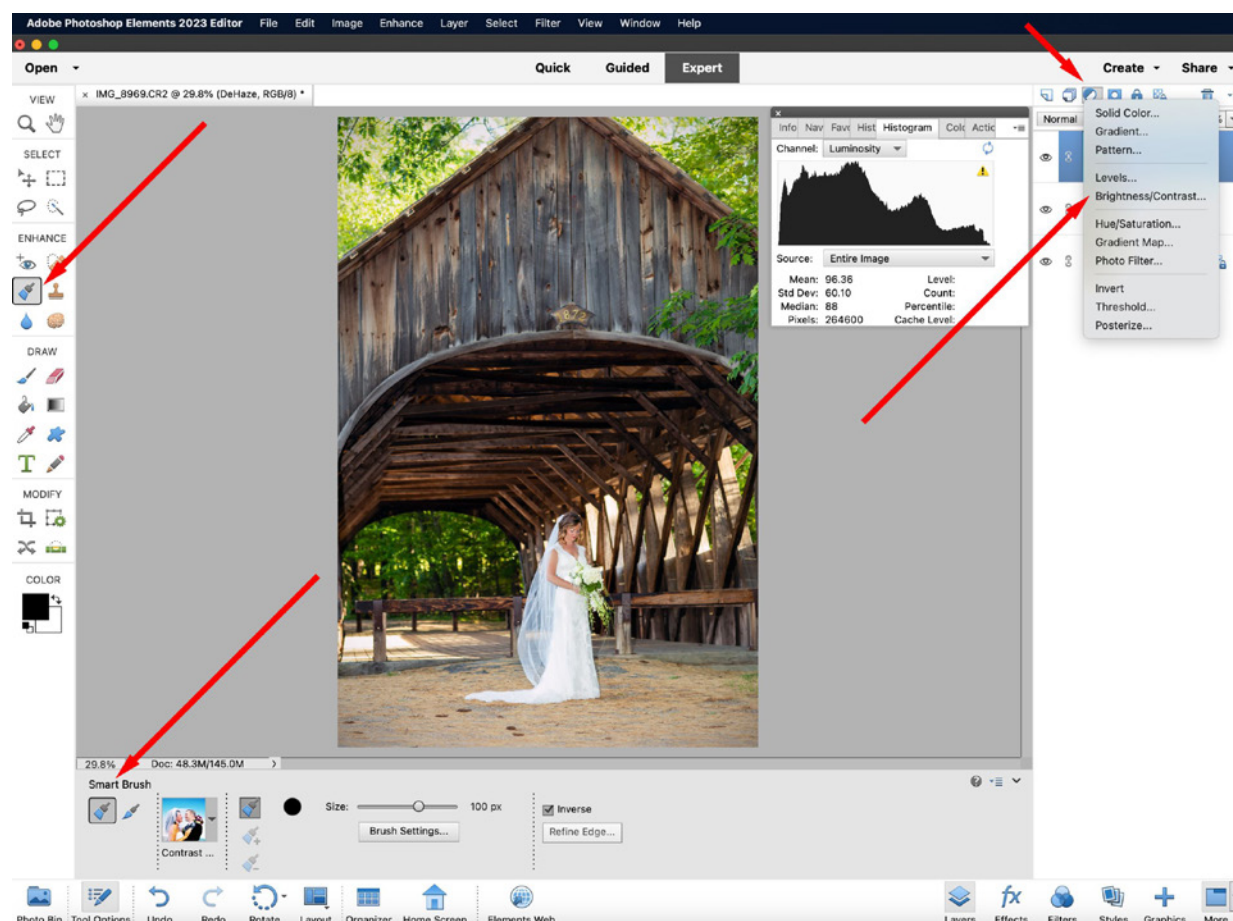
Step Fourteen – Localized Adjustments with the Brush Tool

Elements does not provide a Brush Tool that operates similarly to the ones present in Photoshop and Lightroom. Instead, it has a Smart Brush Tool.

Unfortunately, in my opinion, it's not all that smart, or perhaps to 'make it easy' they've taken out the benefits of the Brush tool for the serious photographer.

It doesn't allow localized sharpening, which is one of my favorite edits with the Brush Tool. Plus, it's not as user-friendly if you're trying to do something specific.

However, since you may not know how it works, I think it would benefit you to see a little demonstration.



131 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

In Reference 131, the upper left-facing red arrow points out the Smart Brush Tool. The lower left-facing arrow points out the tool settings. These settings include the following:

- Smart Brush
- Smart Detail Brush

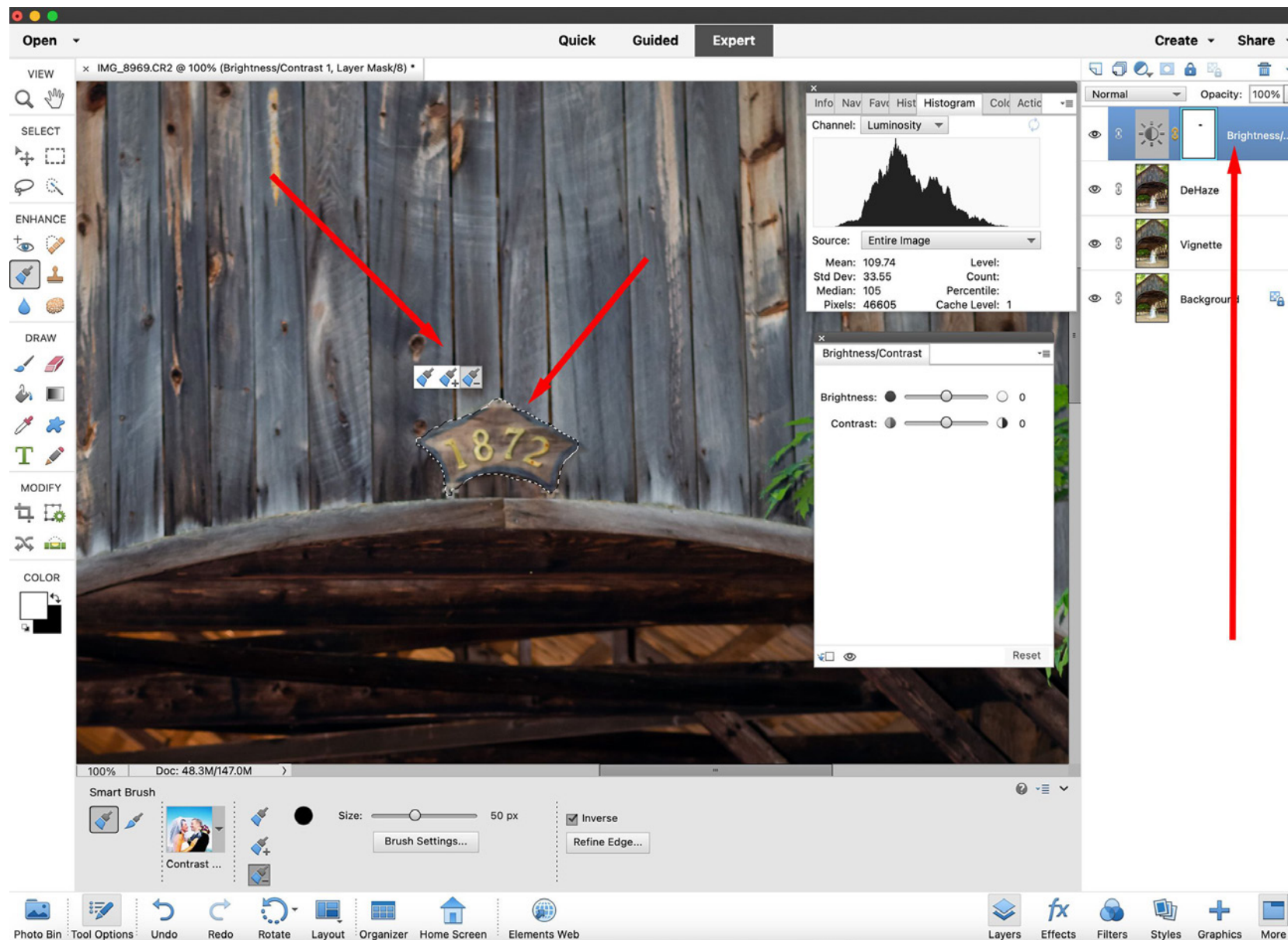
- Preset Functions
- Selection Adjustment Tools
- The Brush Size
- An Inverse Function
- Refine Edge radio button

The two red arrows in the upper-right corner of the workspace indicate where the Adjustment Layer icon is located and that we are creating a Brightness/Contrast Adjustment Layer.

For the purposes of this guide, I will show you how to use the Smart Brush Tool to recreate one of the edits we did in the previous sections using the Brush Tool. We will brighten the contrast and saturation of the '1872' on the bridge.

When you select the Smart Brush, and then if you click anywhere in the Preview Window, Adobe Elements will automatically create an Adjustment Layer based on the selection in the 'Picker.' There is no way to turn this off (that I could find). So, follow this procedure instead.

Select the Smart Brush Tool. Do not click on the Preview Image. Go to your Layers Tab and create a new Adjustment Layer. For the purposes of this guide, we are going to do a 'Brightness/Contrast' layer first.



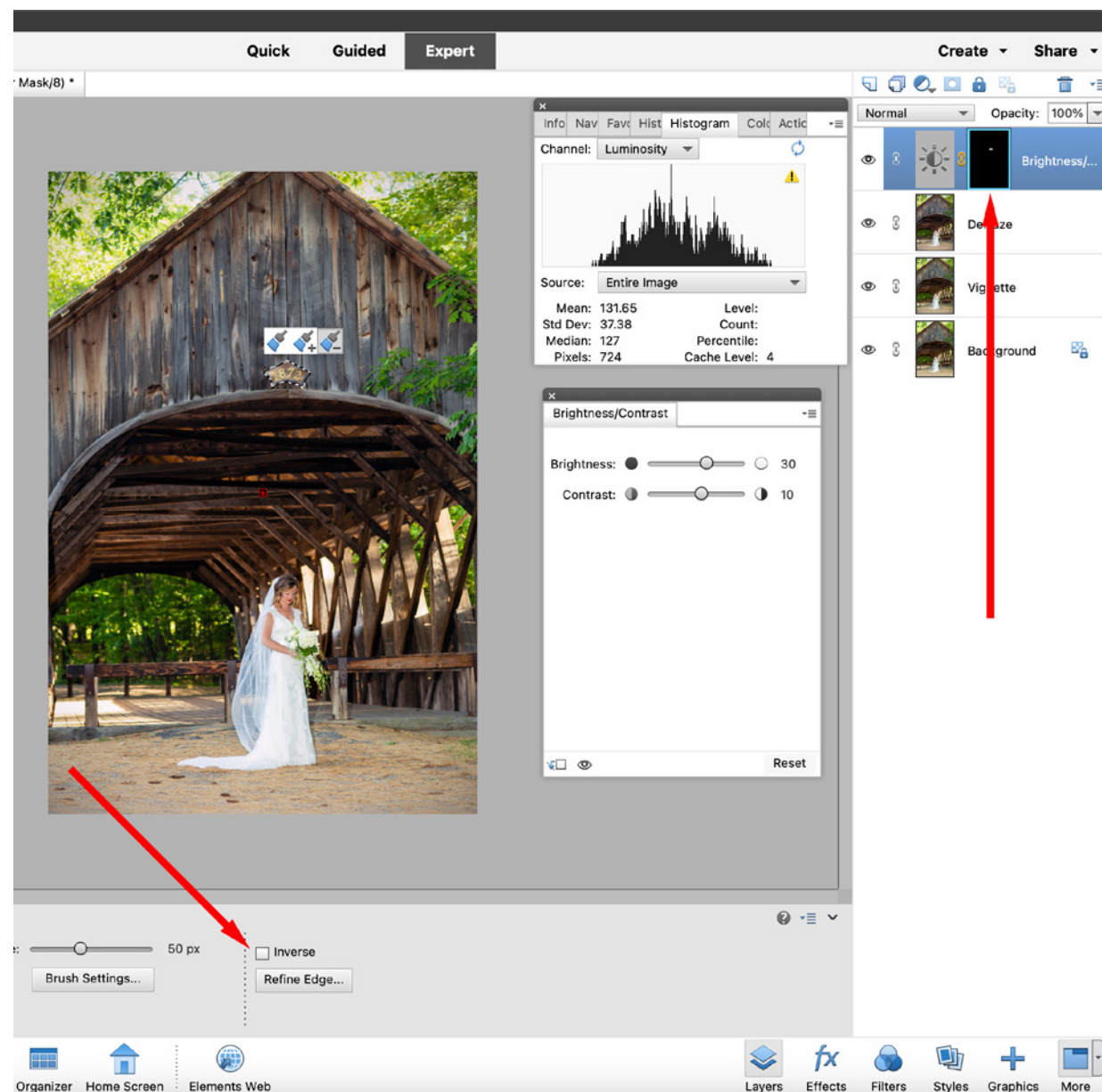
132 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

After creating the Adjustment Layer, we want to ensure the 'Mask' is selected in the Layers palette. The far-right red arrow points to the correct layer that should be highlighted.

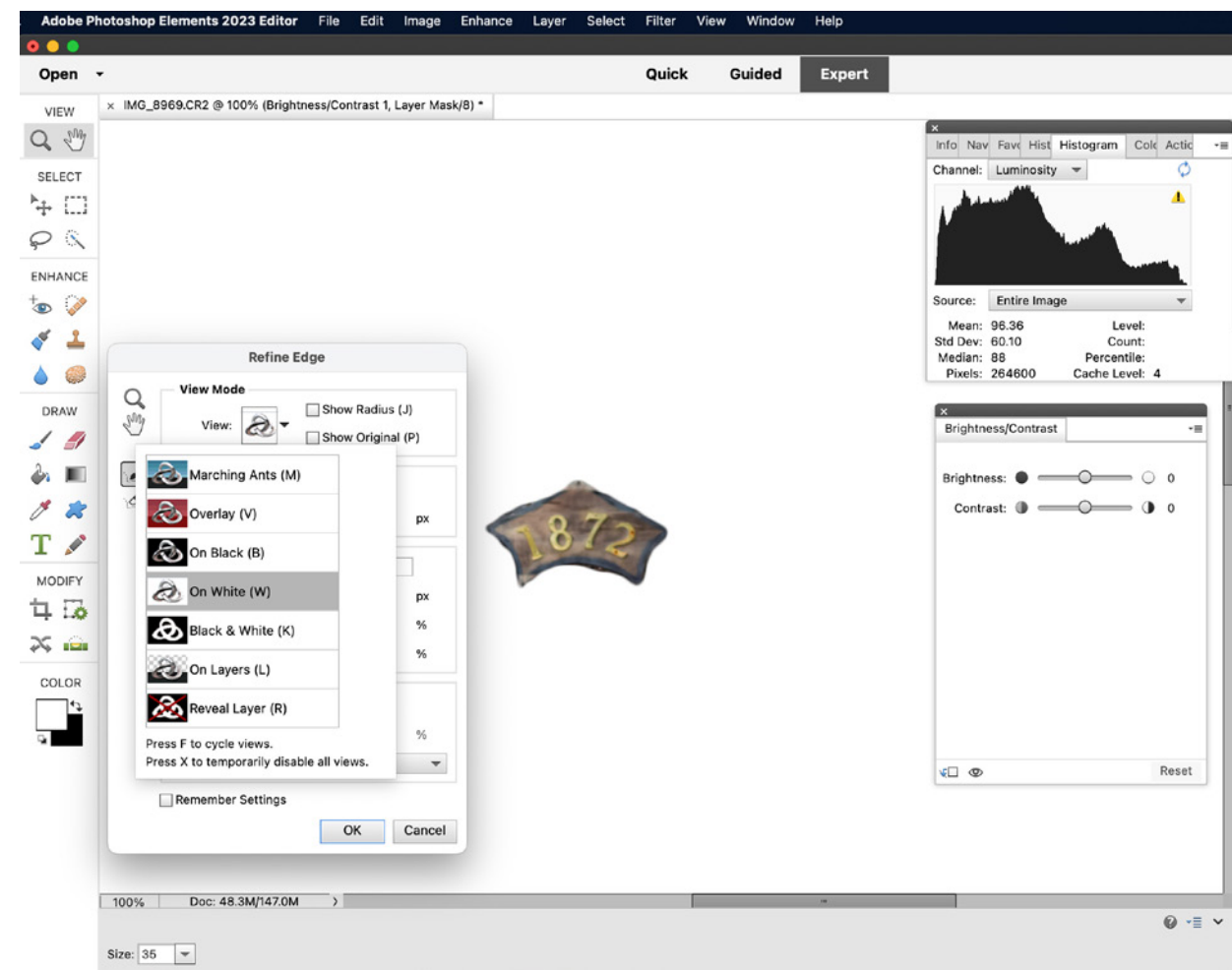
Make sure that layer is selected and the Masking box (on the right side of that layer) is also selected. You'll know that it is selected when it has a blue box around it.

Now, begin to paint over the sign with the Smart Brush. A selection area of 'Marching Ants' will appear. Use the + and – Brushes to adjust the selection area until just the sign is selected.

Over in the Adjustment Layer, you will notice a small white area appearing in the Mask box. This is your mask. If your mask appears white with a small black area, you have your mask inverted, as illustrated in Reference 132. Uncheck the box at the bottom of the workspace that says 'Inverse.'

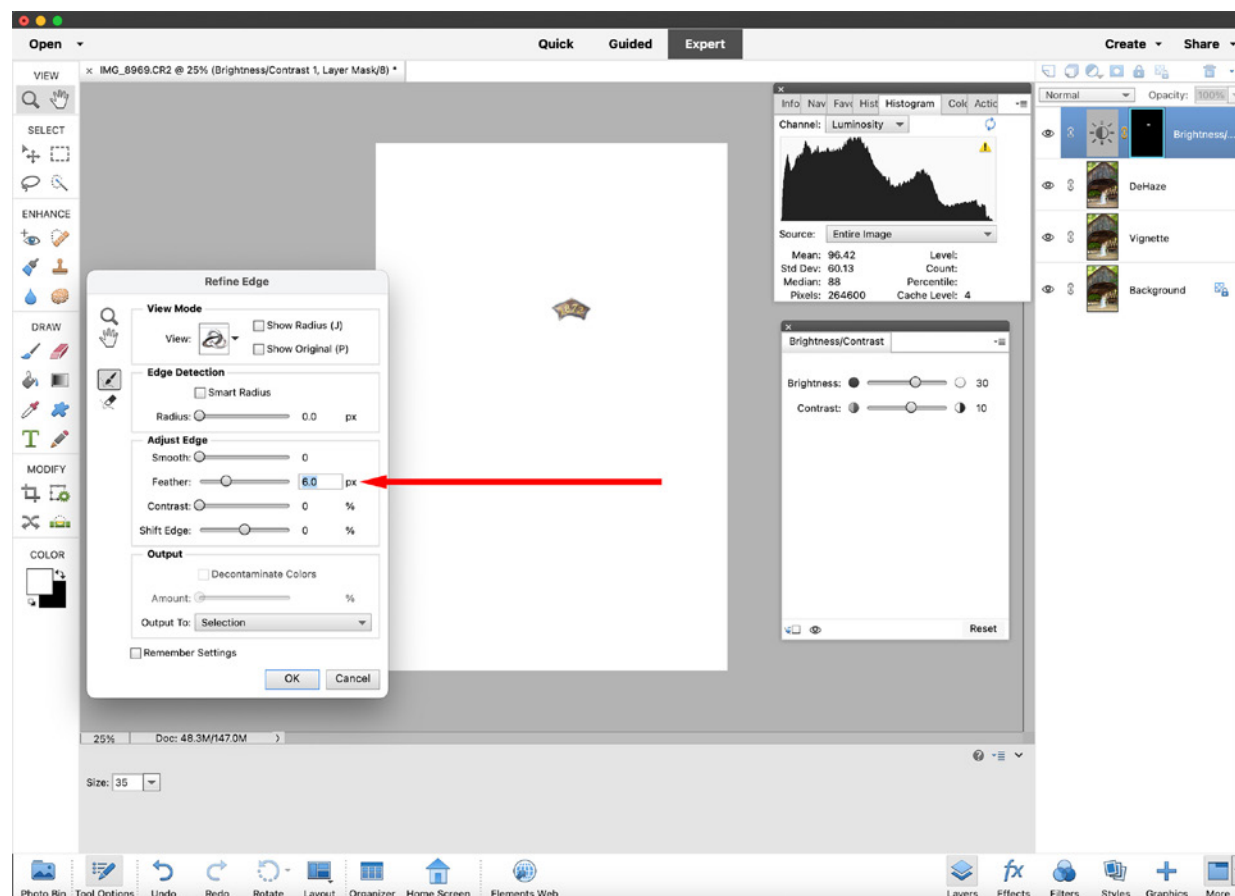


133 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault



134- Screenshot by Kent DuFault

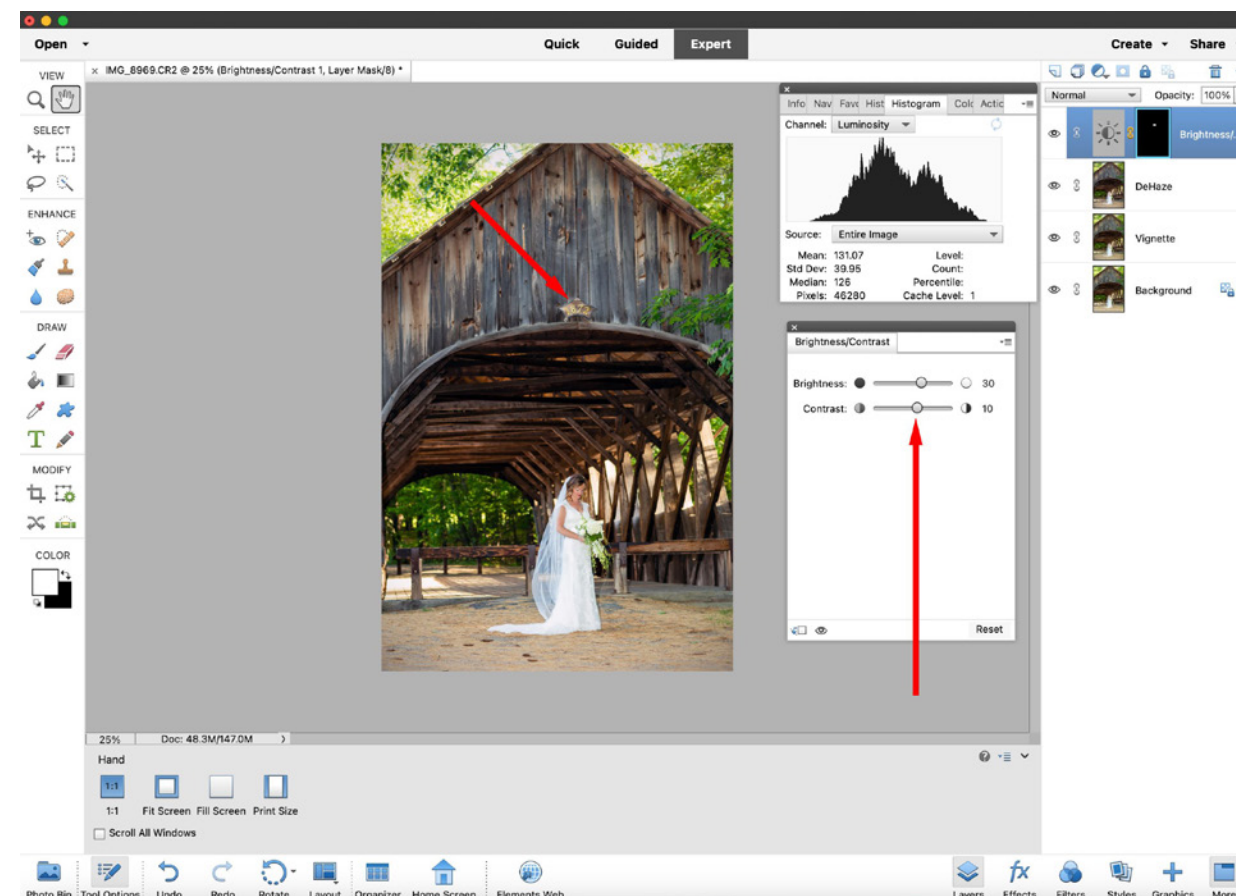
In the Refine Edge toolbox, you can change how the mask is displayed in the Preview Window.



135 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

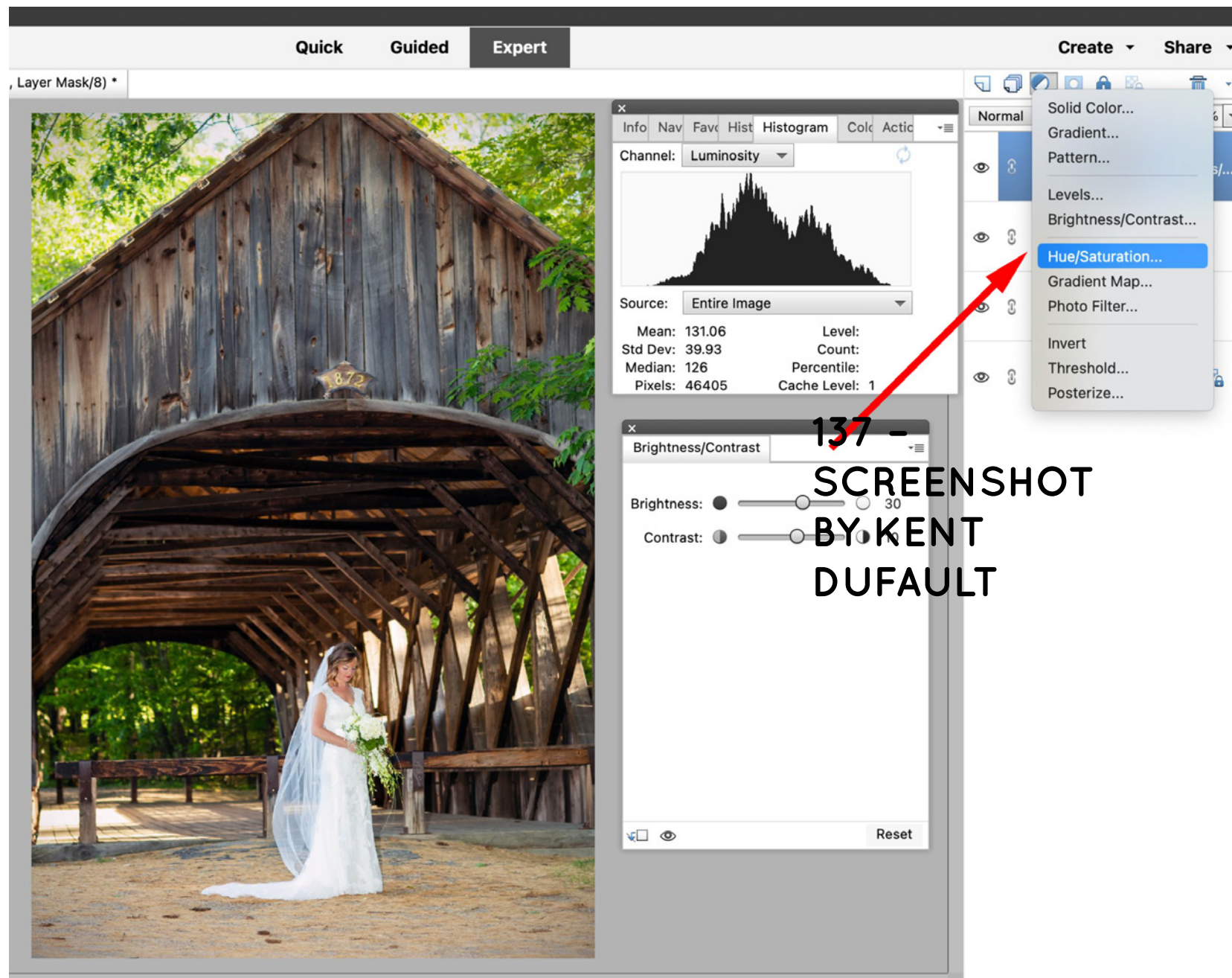
After you've made your selection, you can refine it by clicking on the 'Refine Edge' radio button at the bottom of the workspace.

If you click 'View Mode,' you can change how you see the mask on the Preview Image. You can add a feather to the mask's edge, which I will do here (Reference 135). If you wish to save your settings as 'Preference,' click the 'Remember Settings' box.



136 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Once you've refined your mask, you will make your adjustments in the pop-up toolbox window. It's a good idea to check your adjustments at both a 200% view and a Fit Screen view. The 200% view helps you detect if your adjustments are spilling into areas that you don't want them to or if you're creating unsightly artifacts. The Fit Screen view enables you to visualize your changes in the overall photograph. For example, we are trying to make the 1872 sign stand out, but we don't want it to garner so much attention that it draws away from the bride.

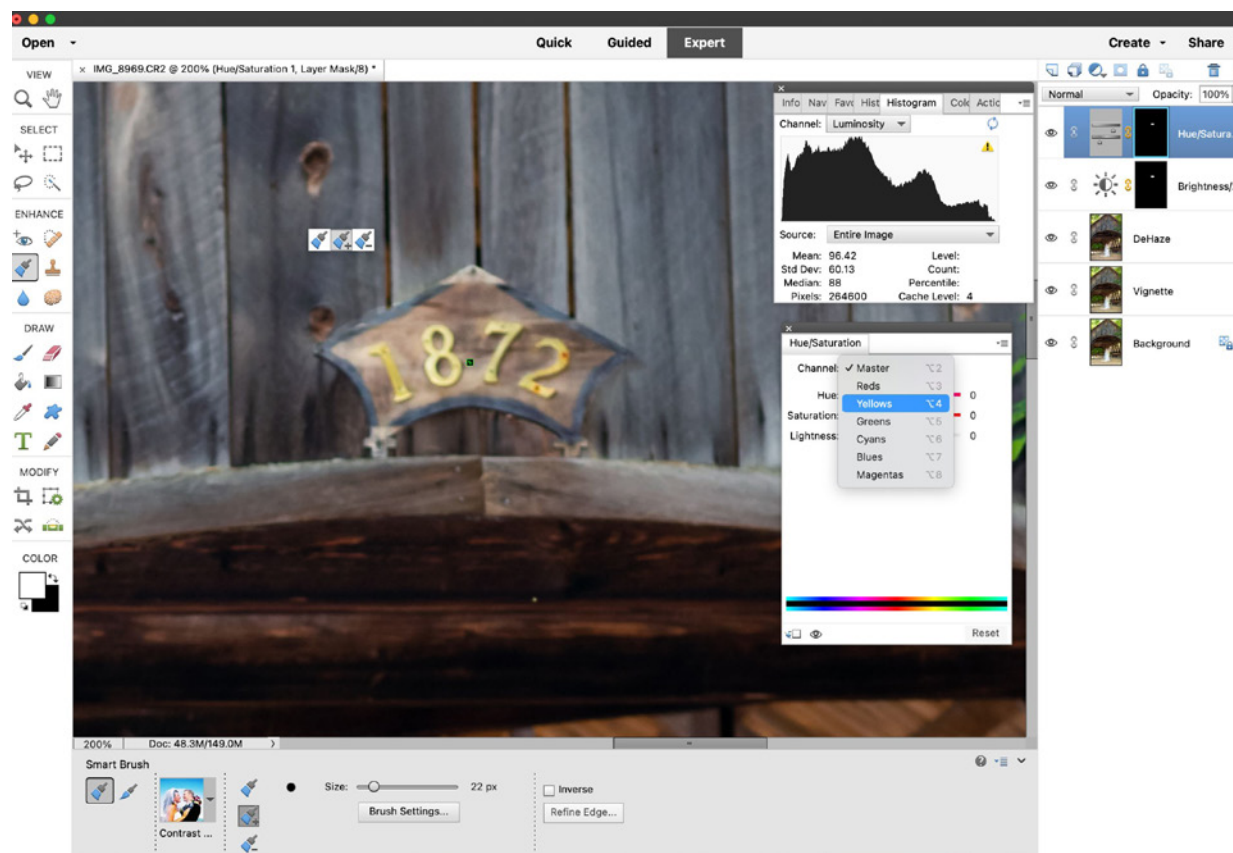


132 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

As we did in the other sections, we will increase the saturation of the yellow in the 1872 sign.

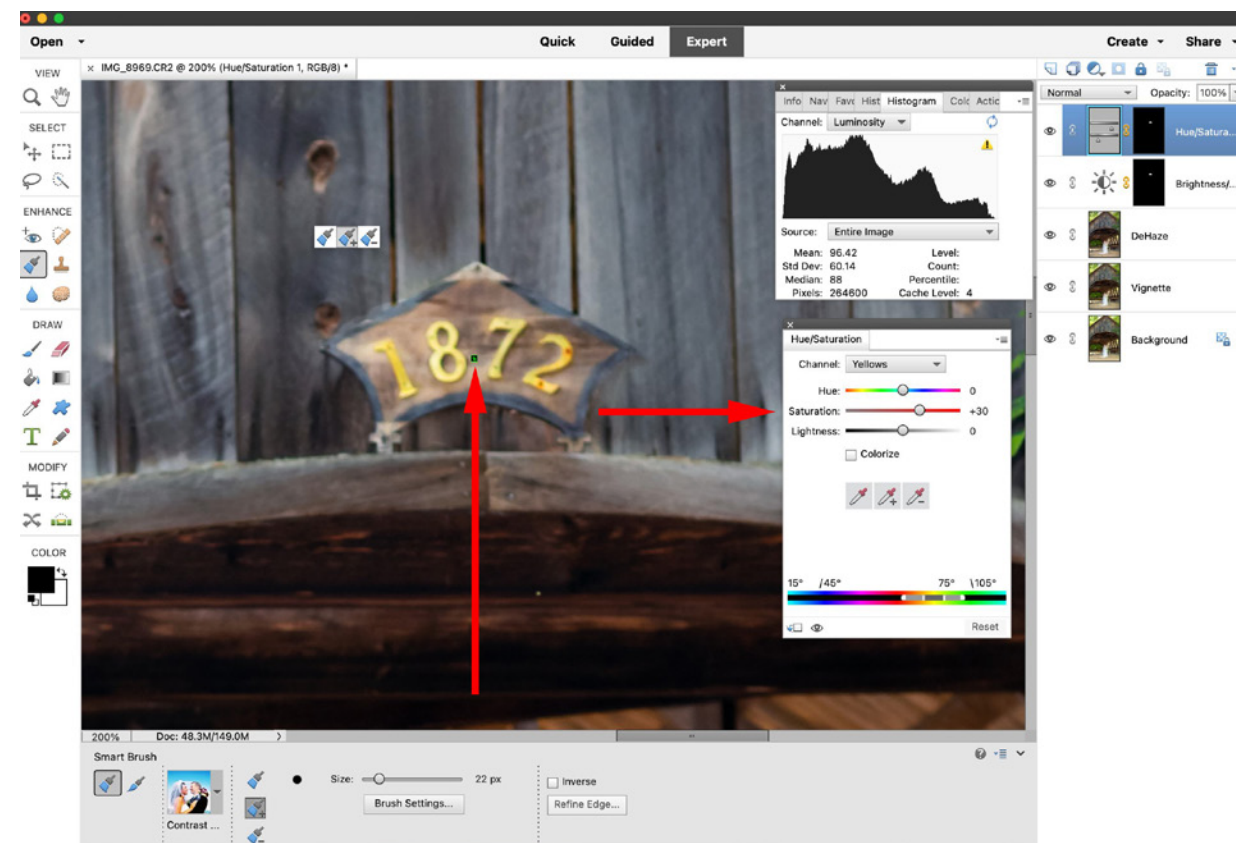
Note: For the software to recreate the previous mask, you must have the Smart Brush Tool selected. If you don't have it selected, it will create a new layer and mask, but your previous alterations on the last mask will be missing, and you will have to do it again.

In the Layers Tab, click on Adjustment Layer and then click Hue/Saturation. A new layer will appear and automatically have our previously made mask.



138 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

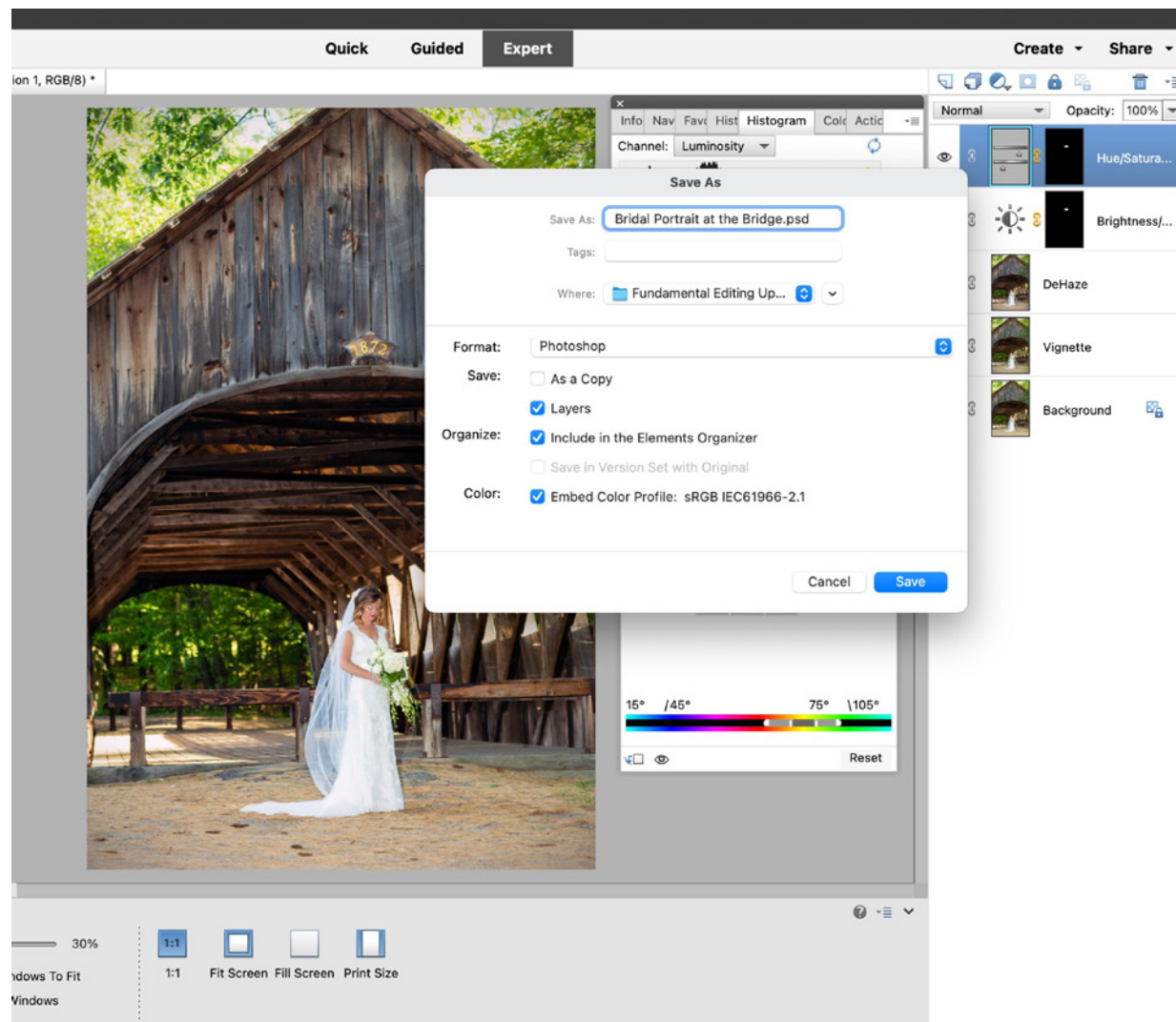
In the pop-up toolbox, select 'Channels' and then select 'Yellows.'



139 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

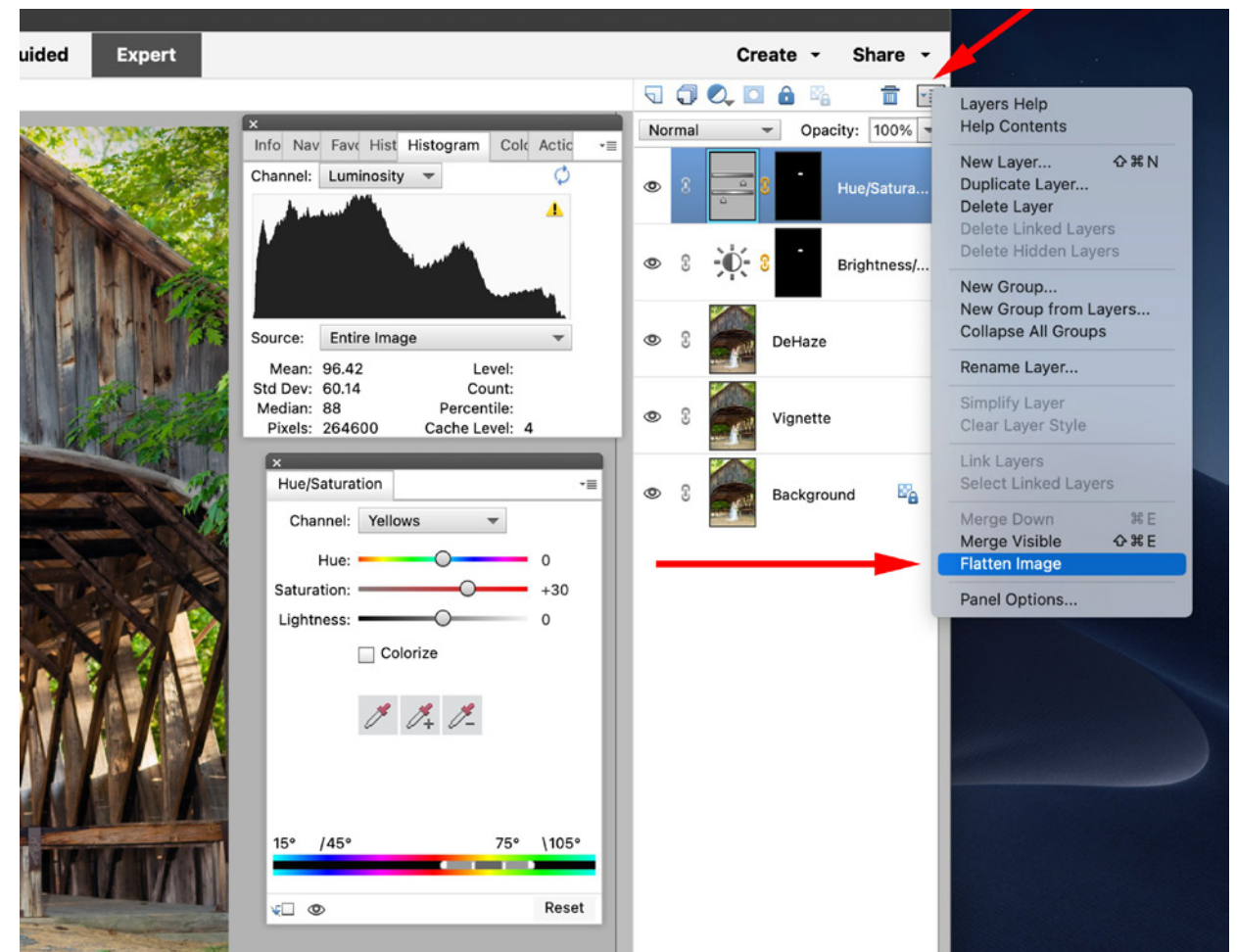
We will adjust the Yellows saturation within the sign until the 1872 visually pops from the surrounding bridge. I chose a setting of +30. Again, you should check your work at a 200% Preview and again at a Fit Screen Preview.

Note: Did you notice the small green box in the Preview window? Whenever you create a new Adjustment Layer mask, Elements assigns it a colored box. Clicking on each box cycles through the different masks. To see those colored boxes, the Smart Brush Tool must be selected.



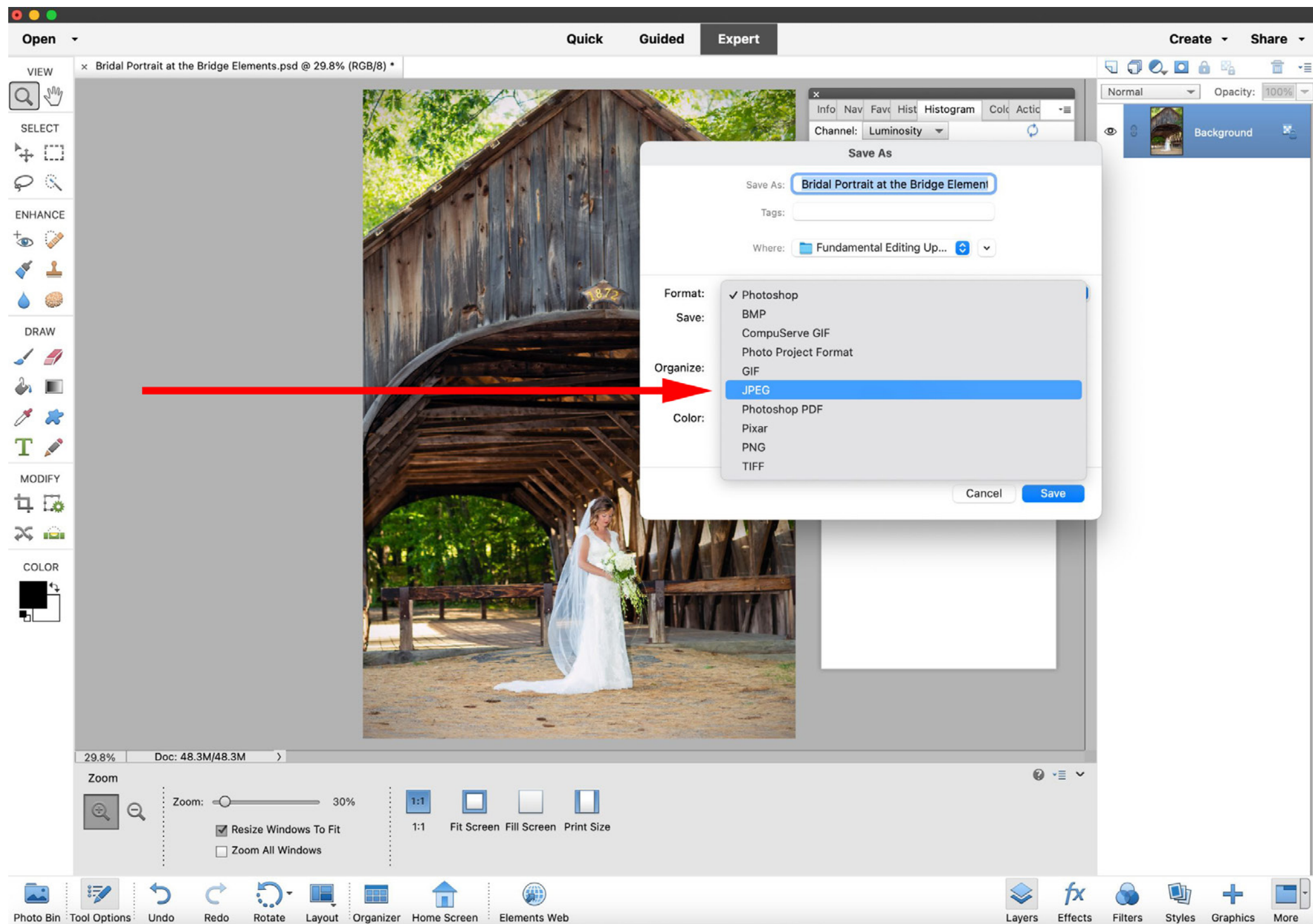
140 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

! Important: To save this file so that you can undo things later, you must first save it as a .PSD with the 'Layers' box checked.



141 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Now, click on the icon in the top-right corner that looks like a set of ruled lines with a downward pointing arrow. A pop-up box will appear. Select 'Flatten Image.'



142 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

You can now save your file in the more standardized .JPEG format for distribution.



Here is our final photograph, as edited in Adobe Elements.

**THAT IS THE COMPLETION OF THE
FUNDAMENTAL EDITING LIST IN
ELEMENTS!**

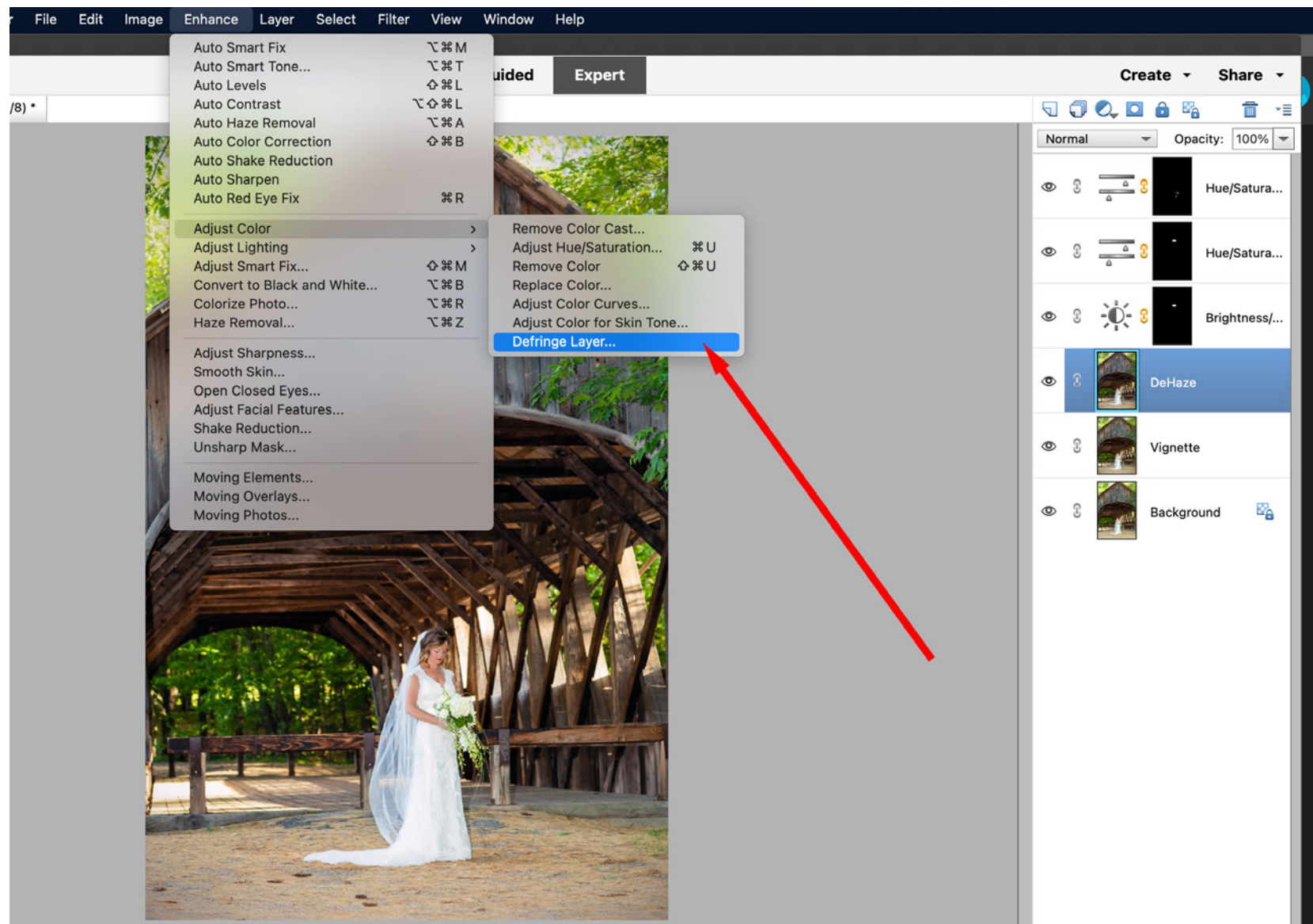
143 – Photograph and Editing by Kent DuFault

Self-Check Quiz

1. What benefit does the Clarity adjustment create in your image?
2. Which should you adjust first: Sharpening or Clarity?
3. How does the Histogram help you set your Vibrance and Saturation settings?
4. In the Adobe Elements section, why did we jump ahead from Step Eleven to Step Fifteen and then return to complete Steps Twelve to Fourteen?
5. Can you do localized sharpening with the Smart Brush?
6. To create a vignette in Adobe Elements, we must use the _____ dropdown menu.
7. Because the _____ adjustment and the _____ adjustment are missing in the Elements Vignette tool, we must go lightly with our settings to not make the vignette overtly obvious.
8. True or False: Should we always use the Auto Haze Removal function in Adobe Elements?
9. Instead of a Brush Tool, Elements has a _____.
10. Name two ways you can tell which Adjustment layer is active in Adobe Elements.

06

ADOBE ELEMENTS BONUS MATERIAL!

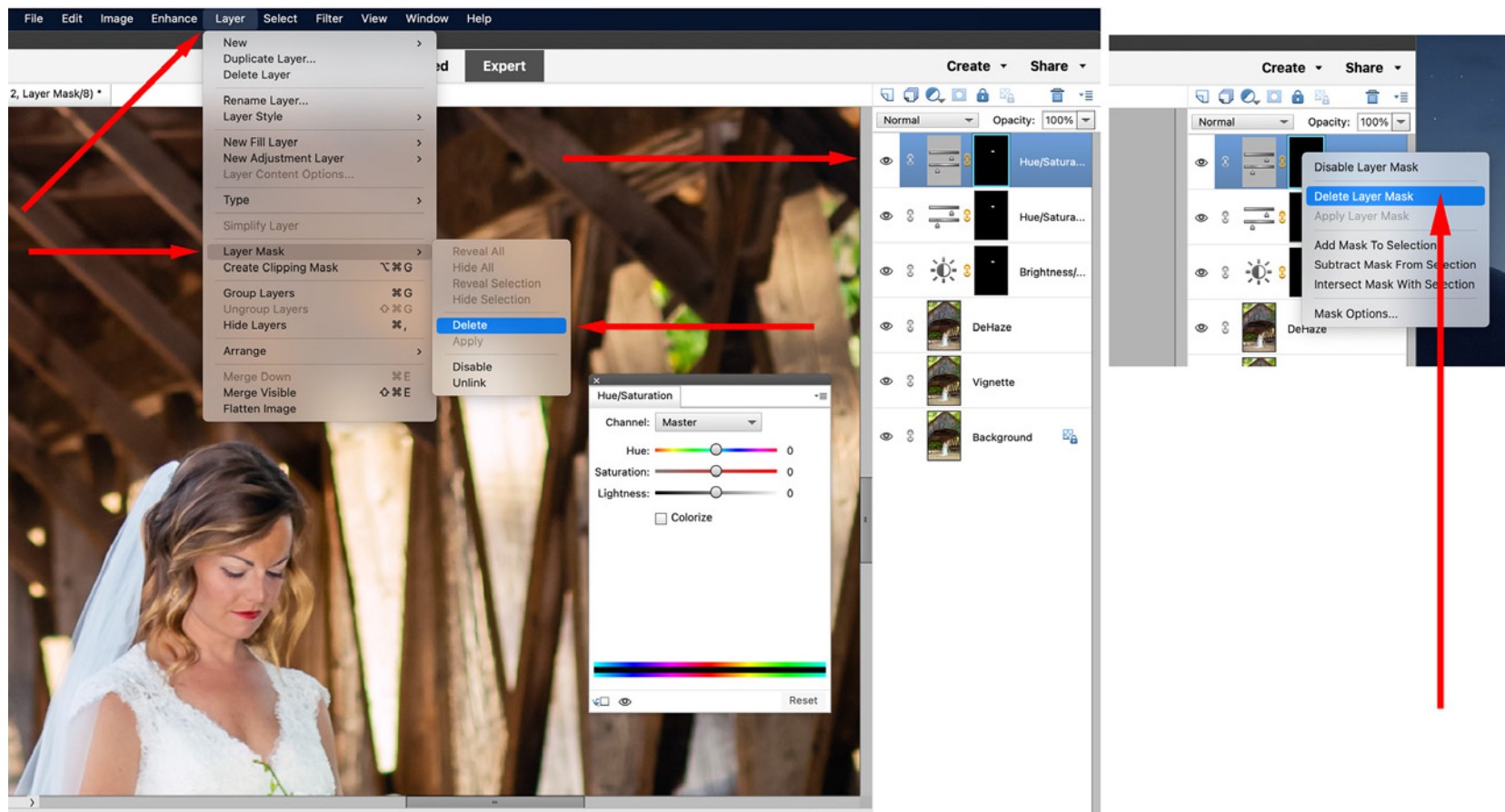


144 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Earlier in the guide (hopefully, you read the entire guide), I discussed lens aberration and how to fix a phenomenon known as color fringing. It's not quite as straightforward to fix this problem in Elements. However, it can be down.

Note: To complete the following steps, you must select the Dehaze layer. The Enhance options are disabled if you're in an Adjustment Layer.

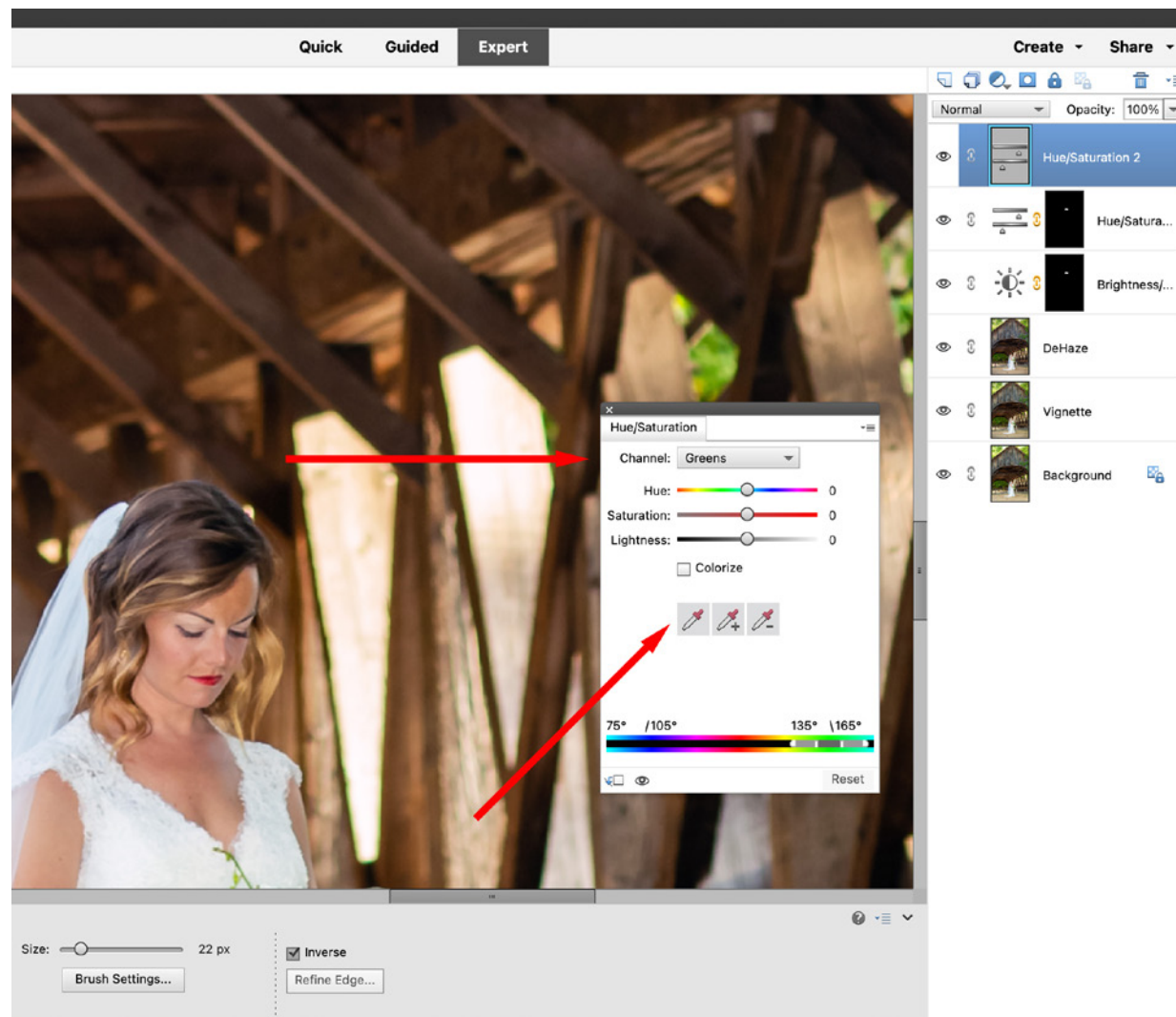
In poking around your Elements program, you may have noticed that under the 'Enhance' dropdown menu and inside the 'Adjust Color' menu, there is an option called 'Defringe Layer.' This function does NOT address the lens aberration known as color chromatic fringing. This function addresses an entirely different issue.



145 – Screenshots by Kent DuFault

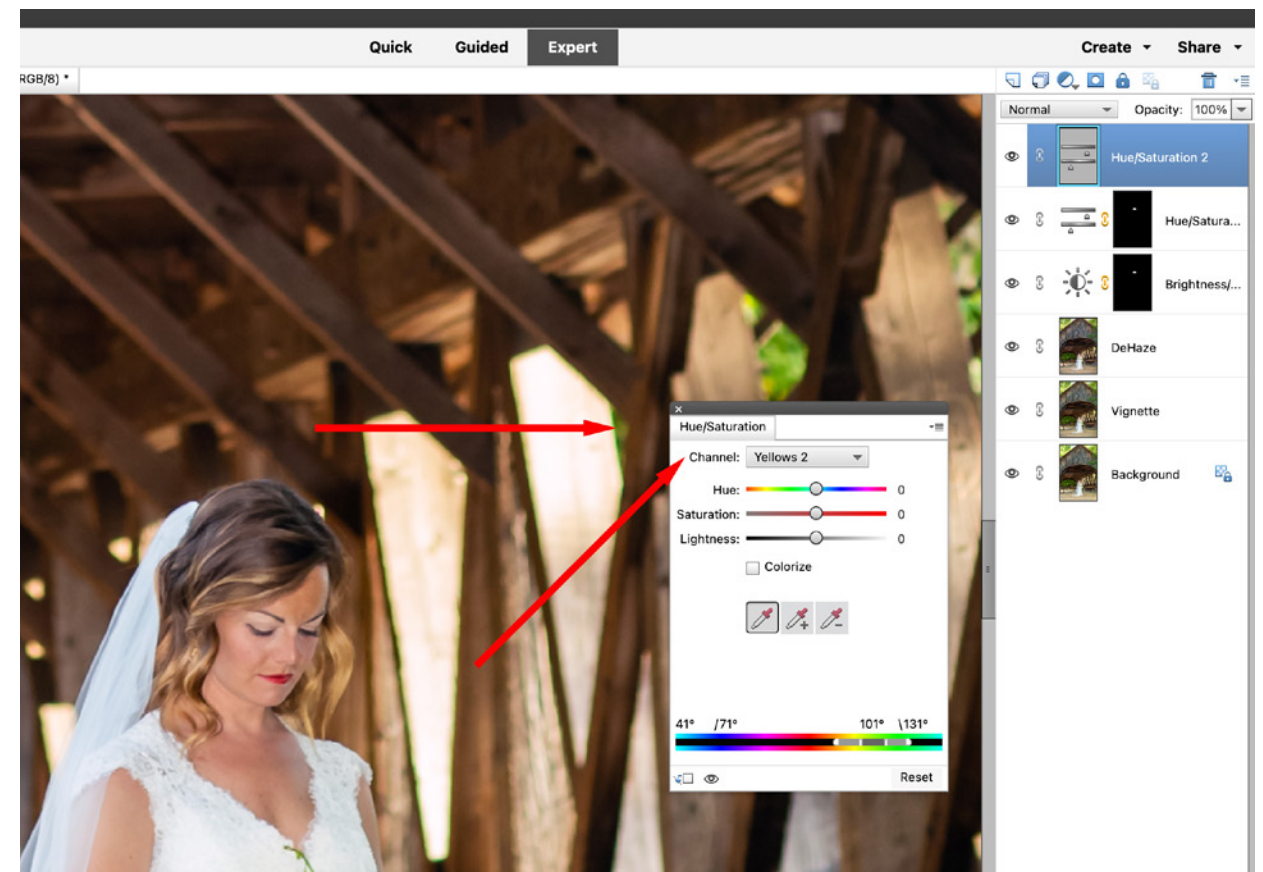
Step One – To Defringe (lens aberration)

1. Go to the Layers tab.
2. Create a new Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer. It will automatically add a mask similar to what we were using before. However, we don't want this mask. There are two ways to delete it.
3. Right-click your cursor over the mask in the Layers palette and select 'Delete Layer Mask.' Or select the Layer dropdown menu, and then select 'Layer Mask.' From there, select 'Delete.'



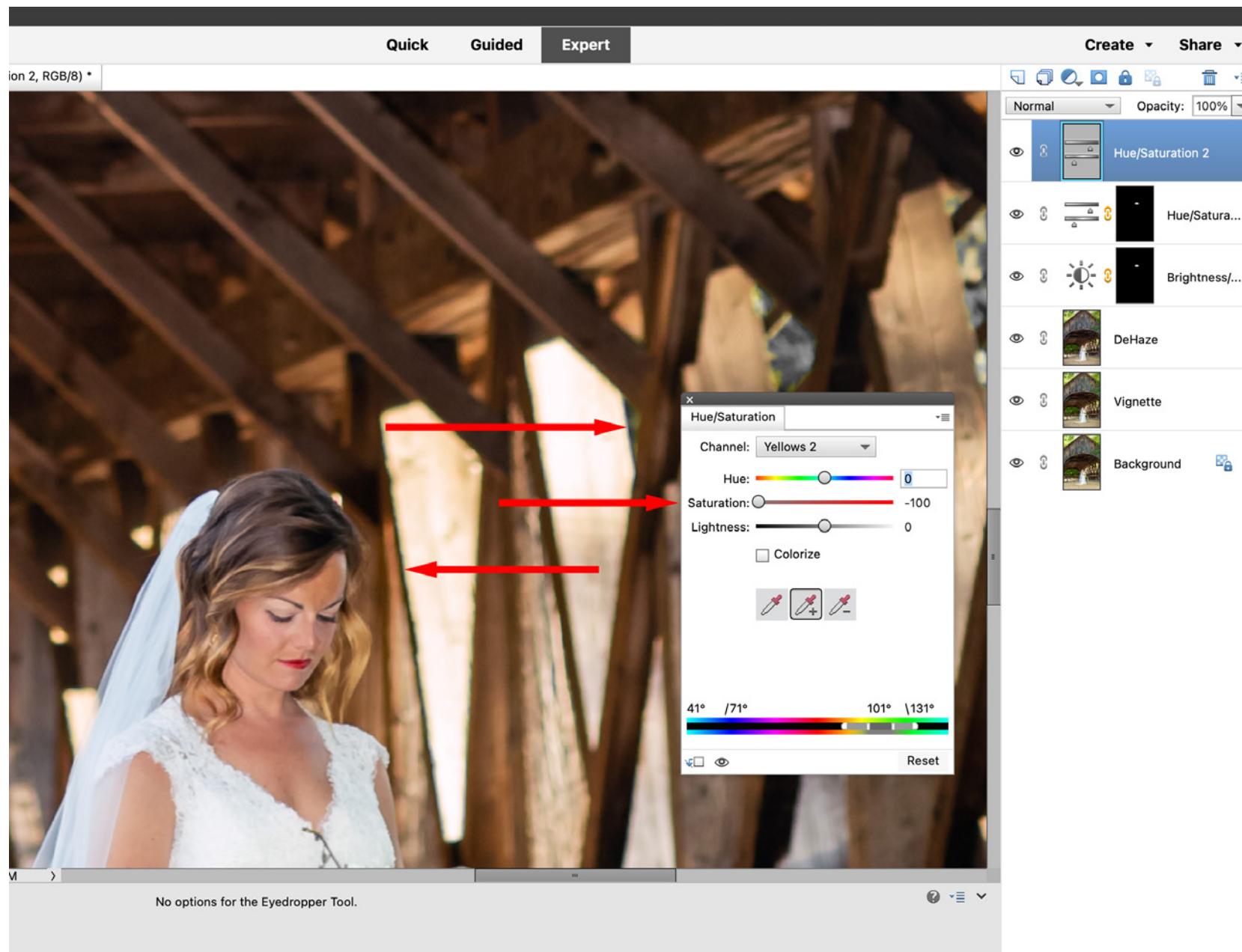
146 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

1. Make sure that the new Hue/Saturation layer is selected.
2. In the Hue/Saturation toolbox, click the Channels dropdown menu and select 'Greens.'
3. Also, select the 'Picker' tool.
4. Increase the magnification of the Preview image until you can clearly see the color fringe. In this case, I used 300%.



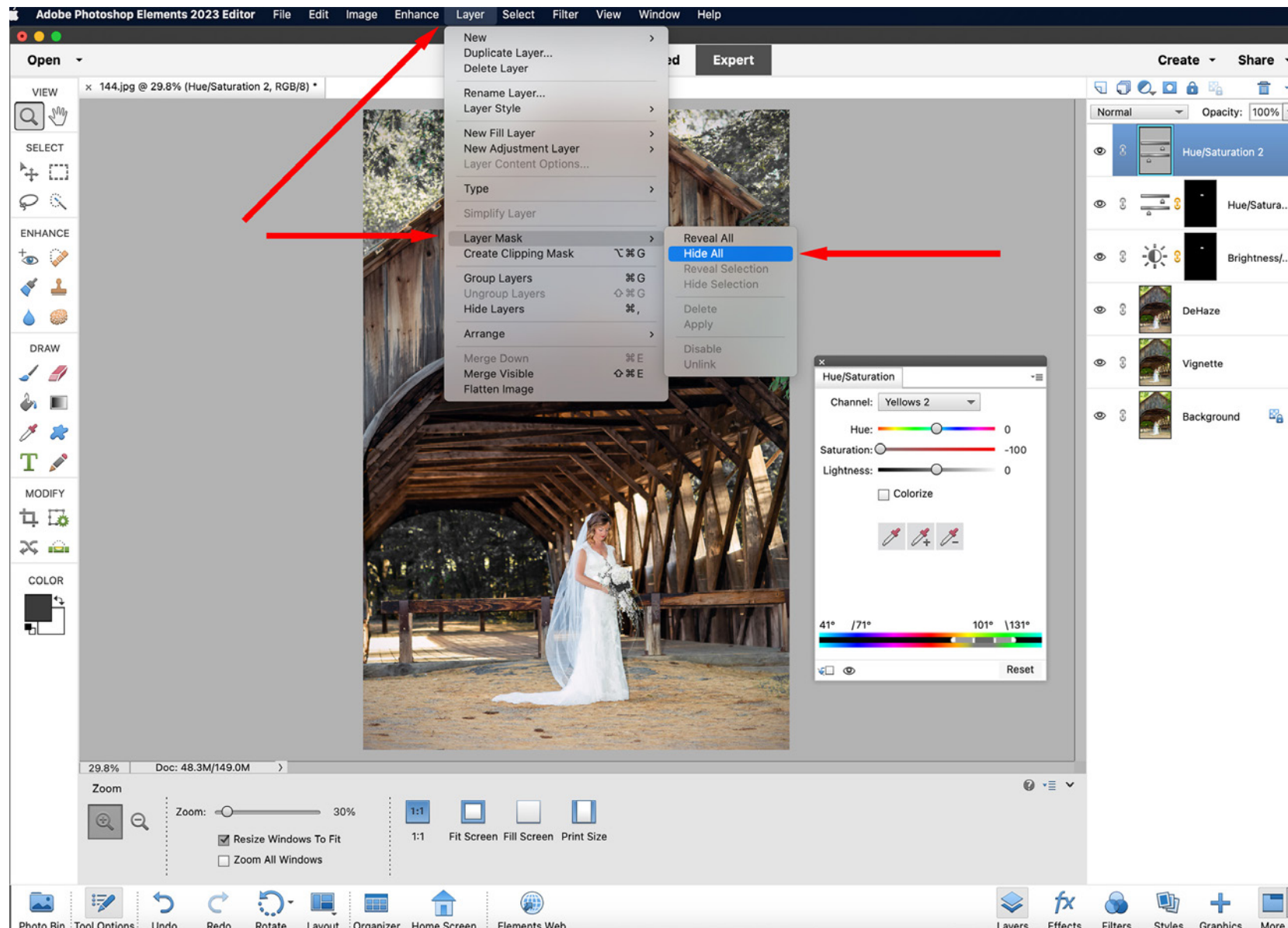
147 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

5. Click on an area of the color fringe with the Picker tool.
6. Notice that the 'Channel' switched to 'Yellows 2.' This is because the software detected more yellow than green in the fringe area.



148 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

7. Reduce the Saturation slider until the green fringe turns to dark gray. Don't worry if you can see this adjustment affecting other areas. You'll see why in a minute.
8. Scroll around and look for other areas of green fringe.
9. Click the +Eyedropper, and then click on the additional green fringe.
10. Adjust the Saturation and Brightness levels until the green fringe disappears.
11. You'll notice that the brackets in the color scale across the bottom have widened. This means more colors are being included in our adjustment layer.

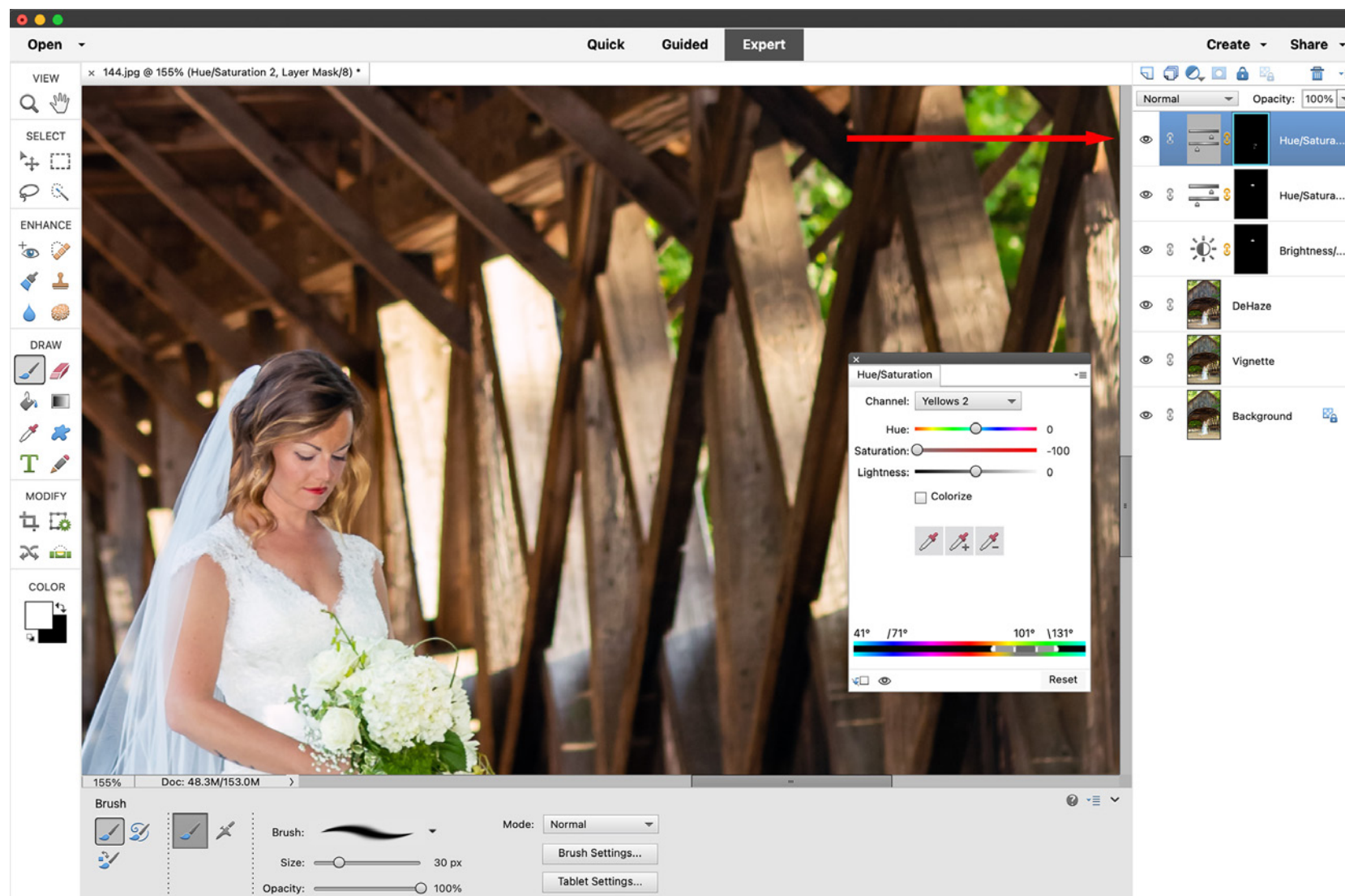


149 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

Using the 'Fit' option on the Navigator panel, zoom your photo out to a full-frame view.

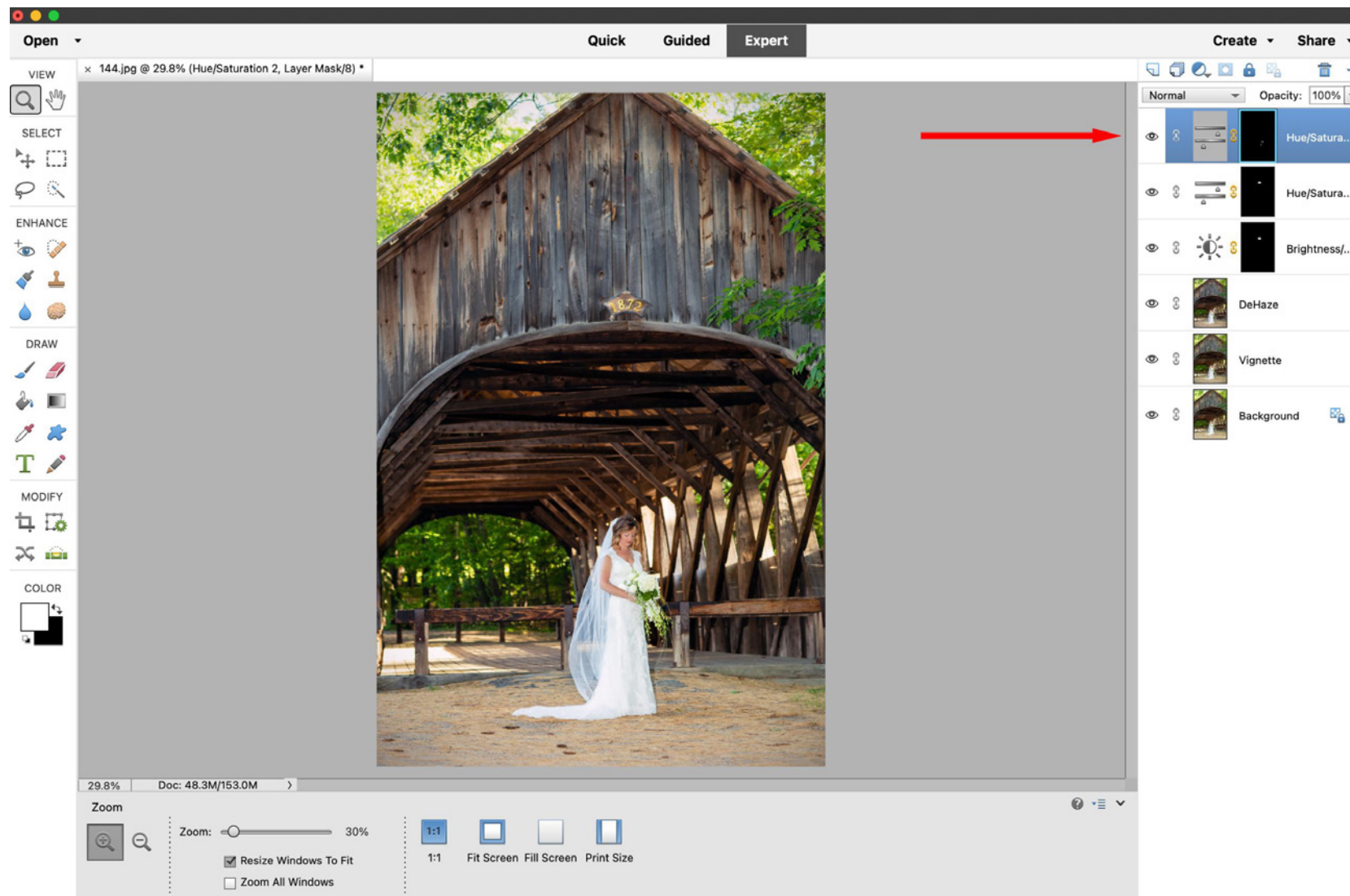
You will first notice that your entire image lacks green and yellow color saturation. Don't worry! Now, we will fix that.

- Ensure you're working on the appropriate layer by checking to see that it is highlighted.
- We are going to create our own 'Layer Mask.' Click on the Layer dropdown menu at the top of the workspace.
- Click on 'Layer Mask.'
- Click on 'Hide All.'
- The effect of our Hue/Saturation Adjustment Layer will now disappear from the entire Preview. It's being 'Hidden.'



150 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

- Check your layer. (See Reference 150, the far-right red arrow.) The layer should be highlighted. It should have a solid black mask. The mask should have a blue line around it indicating that it is selected.
- In the Toolbar on the left, set the 'Top Color' to 'White.'
- Select the 'Paint Brush.'
- Set the Paint Brush to a size that barely covers the areas displaying the green fringe.
- If you click on the 'Brush Settings,' a dialog box opens. The setting we are worried about is 'Hardness.' Set the Hardness to 25%.
- Looking at the lower left (in the Brush Settings), ensure you're on the Brush Tool, not the Impressionist Tool or the Color Replacement Tool.
- Increase your Preview image to where you can comfortably trace the green fringed area with your brush.
- Notice how the green fringe has disappeared, but the foliage in the background is still vibrant green.



151 – Screenshot by Kent DuFault

- Return your Preview image to the 'Fit' Preview. Notice the following.
- All of your greens and yellows in the background have returned.
- The Black Mask on the top Adjustment Layer now has tiny white spots on it. This is where you painted your mask, which applied the effects of the Hue/Saturation Layer to only the areas where we wanted it (the green fringe)!

07

FINAL



Photoshop



Lightroom



Elements

152 – Photograph and Editing by Kent DuFault

The previous page (Image 152) shows the three final images compared.

Good luck with your photography adventures!

Kent

 **Recommended Reading:** Here are some other highly effective training aids. I recommend them.

- [Understanding Post-Processing](#)
- [Powerful Imagery](#)
- [Guide to B&W Post-Processing](#)

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