

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO FUNDAMENTAL EDITING

Premium Photography Guide
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CONTENTS

	Introduction	p.3		
01	About this Guide	p.7	04	The Fundamental Edits List Using Photoshop p.25
02	The Fundamental Edits List	p.10	05	The Fundamental Edits List Using Lightroom p.88
03	Opening a .jpeg Image in the Camera Raw Processing Window	p.14	06	The Fundamental Edits List Using Elements p.122
	Photoshop	p.16	07	Final p.162
	Elements	p.23		

INTRODUCTION

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? Taken a shot that did not really work out, and then we tried to save it in post-production. Am I right?

This guide is not going to be about saving a shot, or turning a shot into some psychedelic, funky piece of modern artwork.

Post-processing is a very in-depth subject. It can be quite overwhelming.

Photzy and I have decided to provide you with a number of guides on post-processing that will address singular 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 "Fundamental editing."


What exactly does Fundamental editing mean?

Fundamental 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, or HDR, or massive cloning, or multi-layering, or masking, or any of those techniques...

No. What I'm talking about are 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 Fundamental edits and it's longer than you might think. I have fifteen items on my "Fundamental Edits 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 began to hear about "workflow." It was a mysterious word that had no value to a film photographer. 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 are going to do our post-processing steps. What I didn't understand, in the beginning, was the importance of "order" when it comes to your post-processing.

If you develop a repeatable process in your Fundamental Edits List and stick to it, you'll tend to get predictable results. If you don't, you may still end up with good results, but then again, you may not. Developing a "workflow" will make your digital photography easier and more predictable.



01

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

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

- Know and understand the differences between Photoshop, Lightroom, and Elements as it relates to doing Fundamental image editing.
- Gain an operational understanding of workflow.
- Know how to open a raw file (in all three programs) as well as why you should do the Fundamental edits on that file in the raw processing window (Photoshop and Elements).
- Know how to evaluate a histogram, check for clipping, and set the highlights/shadows for a maximum range of Dmax (range of tone) without a loss of detail.
- Know how to evaluate and adjust color temperature (white balance).
- Know the what, why, and where of the “tint” adjustment.
- Have insight into the “clarity” adjustment, what it does, and why.
- Know how to adjust vibrancy because digital files inherently lack vibrancy.
- Know how to adjust saturation while remembering that a little goes a long way.
- Cropping - you’ll learn the when, where, how, and why.
- Sharpening - Should you? Shouldn’t you? How much?
- Noise reduction – you’ll know my take on this long-standing argument of when and how much.
- Understand and use the Efex tab, including the use of a vignette and the new de-haze adjustment tool to improve a composition.
- Know how to fine-tune the image with the Adjustment Brush.



02

THE FUNDAMENTAL EDITS LIST


I remember when noise reduction software first came into the photographic world. Everyone had an opinion as to when you should apply the 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 Edits List after years of working on my own photographs, as well as managing the retouching production facility for a chain of photo studios.

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

 **Key Lesson:** When using Photoshop or Elements, the best location to accomplish your Fundamental Edits List is in the "raw processing window." I say this because the edits are then "non-destructive," meaning your original file is always available to you, and the software is creating a metadata file that is keeping notes regarding any changes that you make to the original file. This makes changing your mind later on 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. Lightroom works a little differently. It always keeps a metadata file on every image that 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 show you how in a moment.

Let's take a peek at the items on my Fundamental Edits 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
- Vibrancy
- Saturation
- Efex – Vignette
- Efex – DeHaze
- Localized Exposure and Sharpening Adjustment with the Adjustment Brush
- Global Sharpening

When we complete the Fundamental Edits List, what are we hoping to accomplish?

I believe that in Fundamental editing there are three goals.

1. Fundamental edits should take your original concept, as designed in-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, Fundamental editing restores depth, color, saturation, contrast etc. to something closer to our original vision.
2. Fundamental 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 print would not look very good. The Fundamental edits whip your file into shape so that you get the best possible photographic print.
3. Fundamental edits should be used to fine-tune your composition.

Self-Check Quiz

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

Note: There are no answer keys to self-check quizzes. All of the answers are in the text. If you're unsure how to answer a question, go back and review that section.

Recommended Reading:

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

Recommended Videos:

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

03

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



The Image File as it came out of the camera— Canon 6D— raw file format— 85mm f/4 at 1/180th— with fill flash.



The same Image File after the completion of the Basic Edits list.


Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 001

I'm going to walk you through all fifteen edits on my Fundamental Edits List using each of the Adobe Products: Photoshop, Lightroom, and Elements.

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

! 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.

This is the sample image that we will be working on together. As you can see from the "Before and After" Image 001, the photograph has been improved visually, technically, and aesthetically without altering the original concept of the photograph. This constitutes Fundamental editing.

 I want you to download this image so that you can work along with me.

❗ Important Information: The image that you downloaded is an un-retouched .jpeg. It was generated directly from the raw file that I will be working on. When you're doing your own 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're simply going to 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 is going to be lost to the end user (via the Internet). That being said, always create the best original file that you can, because you never know when someone might contact you asking for the original so that they can purchase some rights and put it on a billboard!

Opening a .jpeg Image in the Camera Raw Processing Window

Since you will be working on a .jpeg file, I want to make sure that 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 format file format you're working with.

PHOTOSHOP

Step One – open the Preferences drop-down menu and select File Handling.

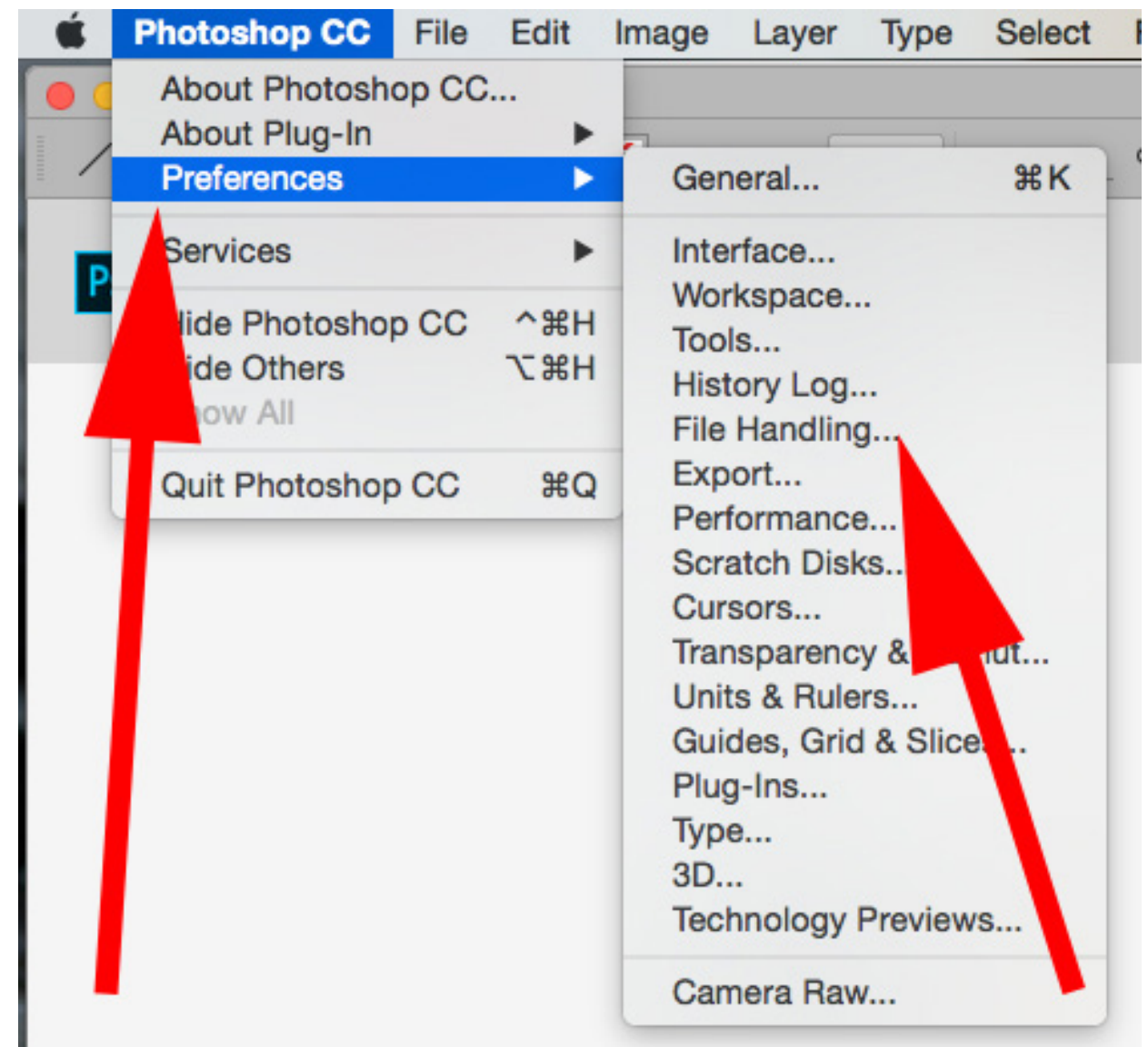


Illustration by Kent DuFault – Reference 002

Step Two – click the Camera Raw Preferences dialog box.

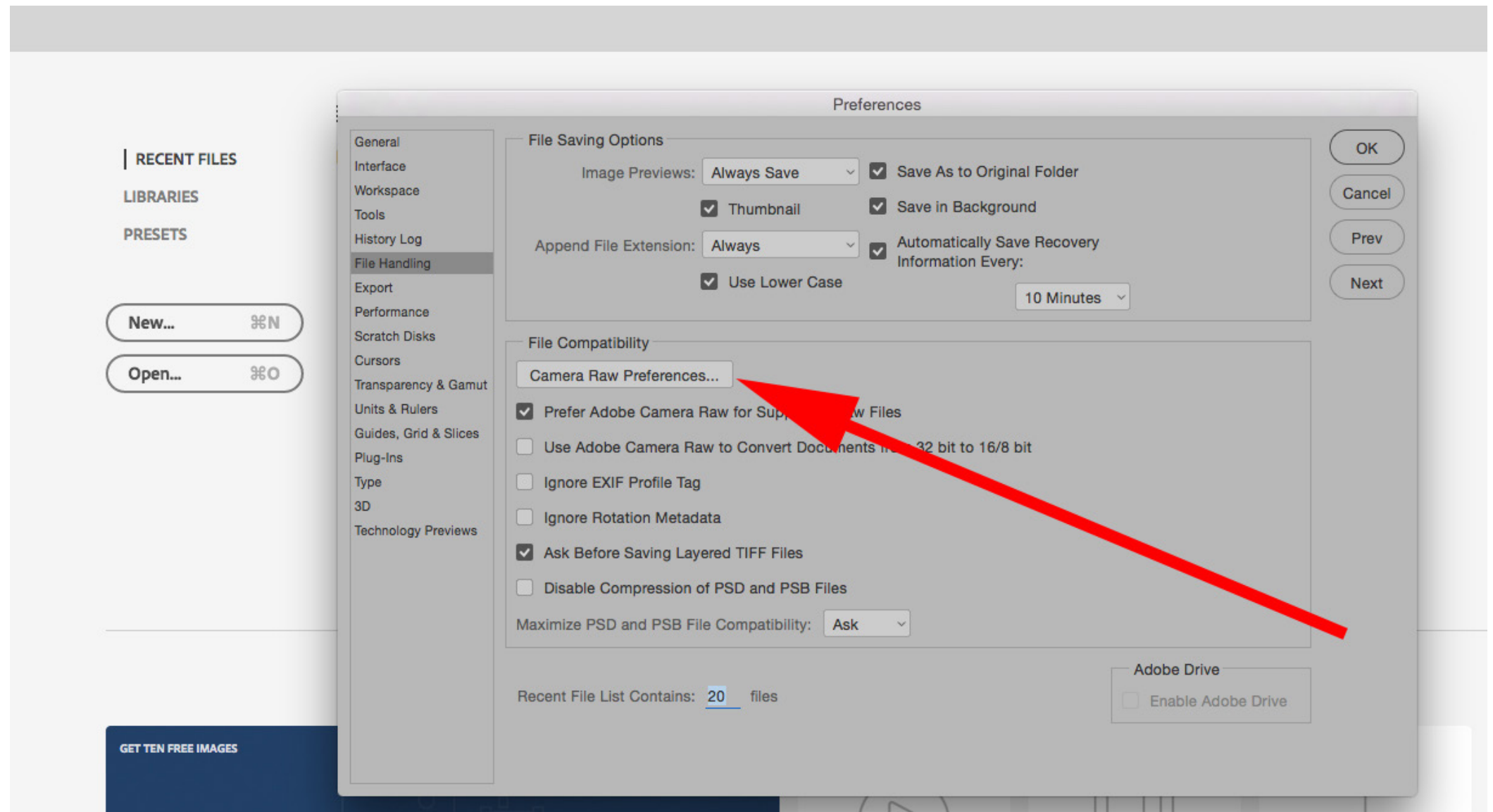


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 003

Step Three – select “Automatically open all supported .jpgs.”

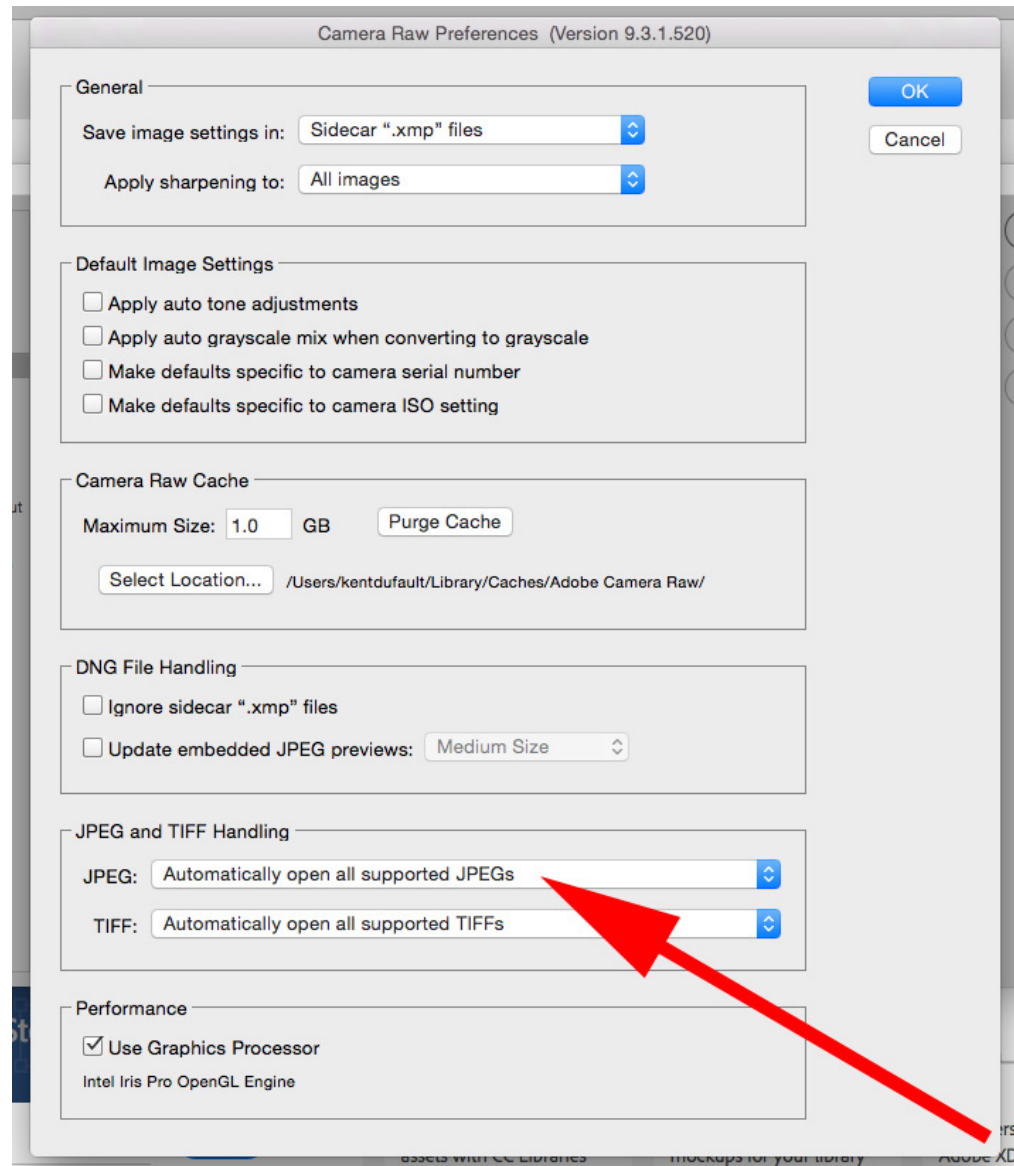


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 004

Step Four – close all dialog boxes.

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

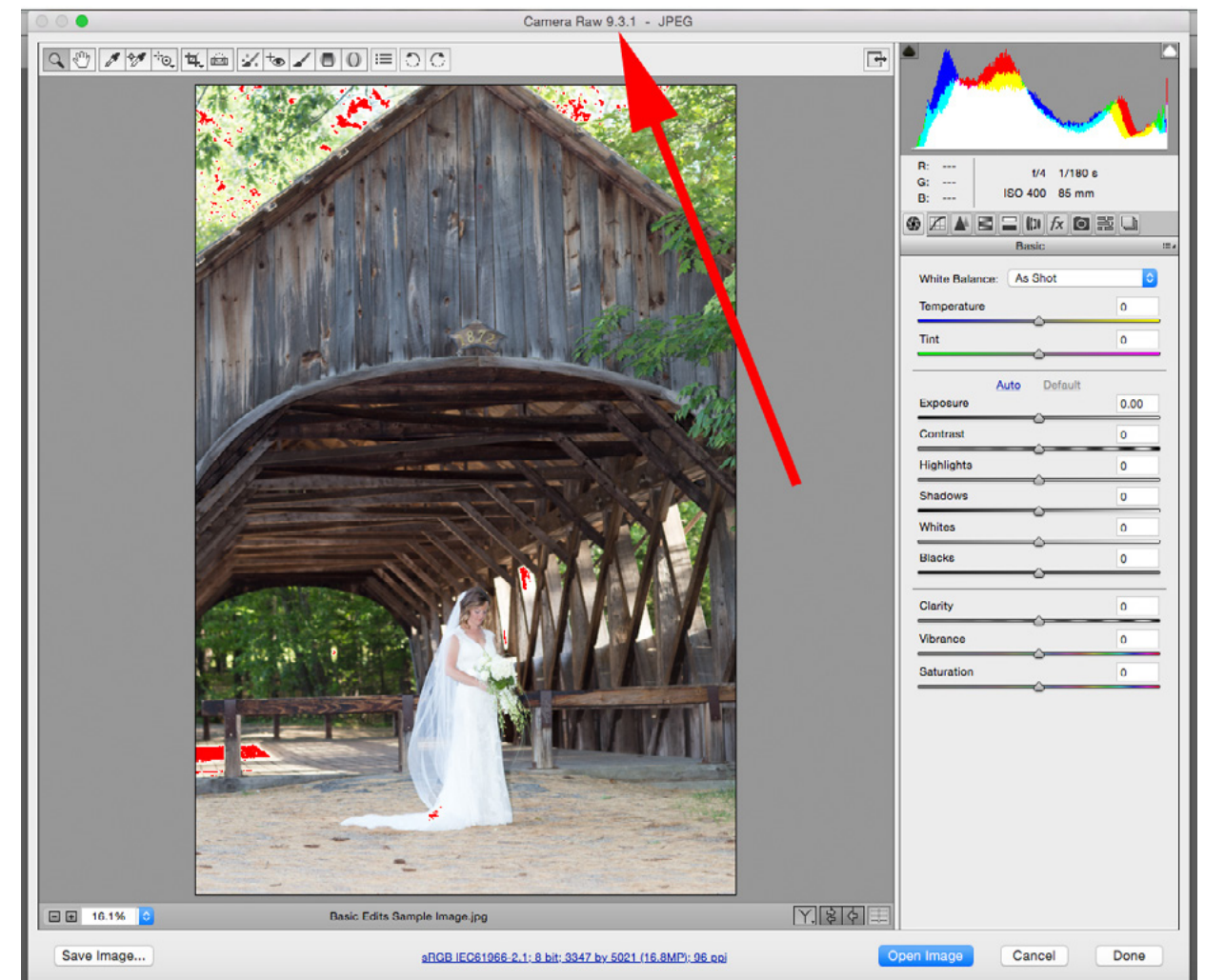




Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 005

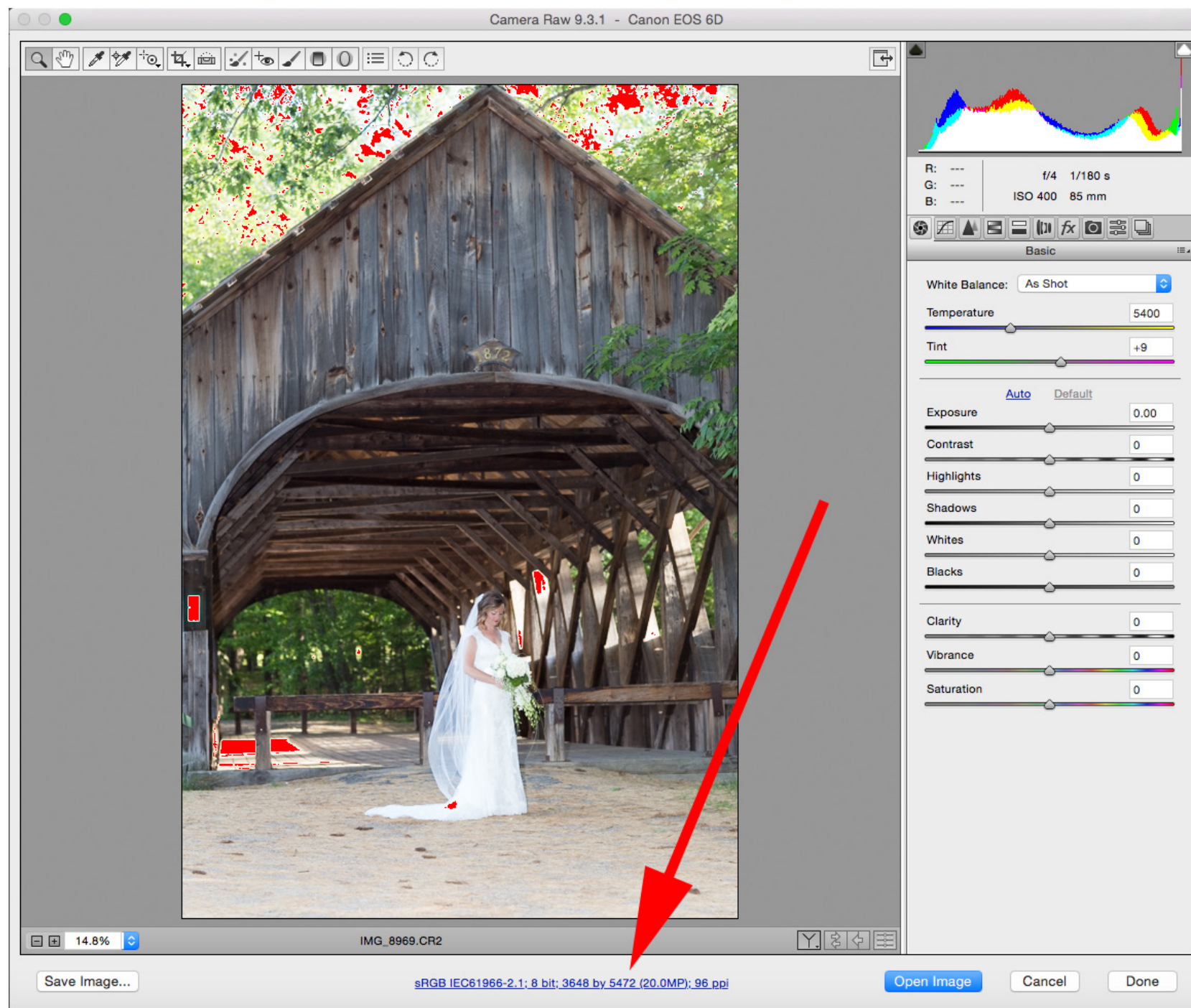
When the file opens in the Camera Raw Processing Window, you can see that you're working on a .jpeg file rather than a raw file by looking at the top of the window.

 **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 are going to be imprinted right into the .jpeg file, and they might make your Fundamental editing job more difficult, 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. Every time a .jpeg file is opened, altered, saved, and closed it loses a little bit of resolution. Over time, that loss of resolution can become noticeable.

- Start with a raw file format whenever possible.
- Complete the Fundamental Edits 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, then it's still better to process the Fundamental Edits List in the Camera Raw Processing Window.

 **Key Lesson:** If reading this saves you even once, then 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*. This is another reason why it's important to have a "workflow." When completing the Fundamental Edits List in the Camera Raw Processing Window, in step-one, you're going to double-check the resolution setting. BUT! What if you forget? What if you do your Fundamental Edits List in the Camera Raw Processing Window with a lower resolution, and then open the image file into 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.



The red arrow in Reference 006 is pointing at the resolution setting for this file. At this point, the resolution is set at the maximum file size of 20.0 MP. However, if I wanted a smaller file to open in Photoshop, it's easy to change the setting.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 006

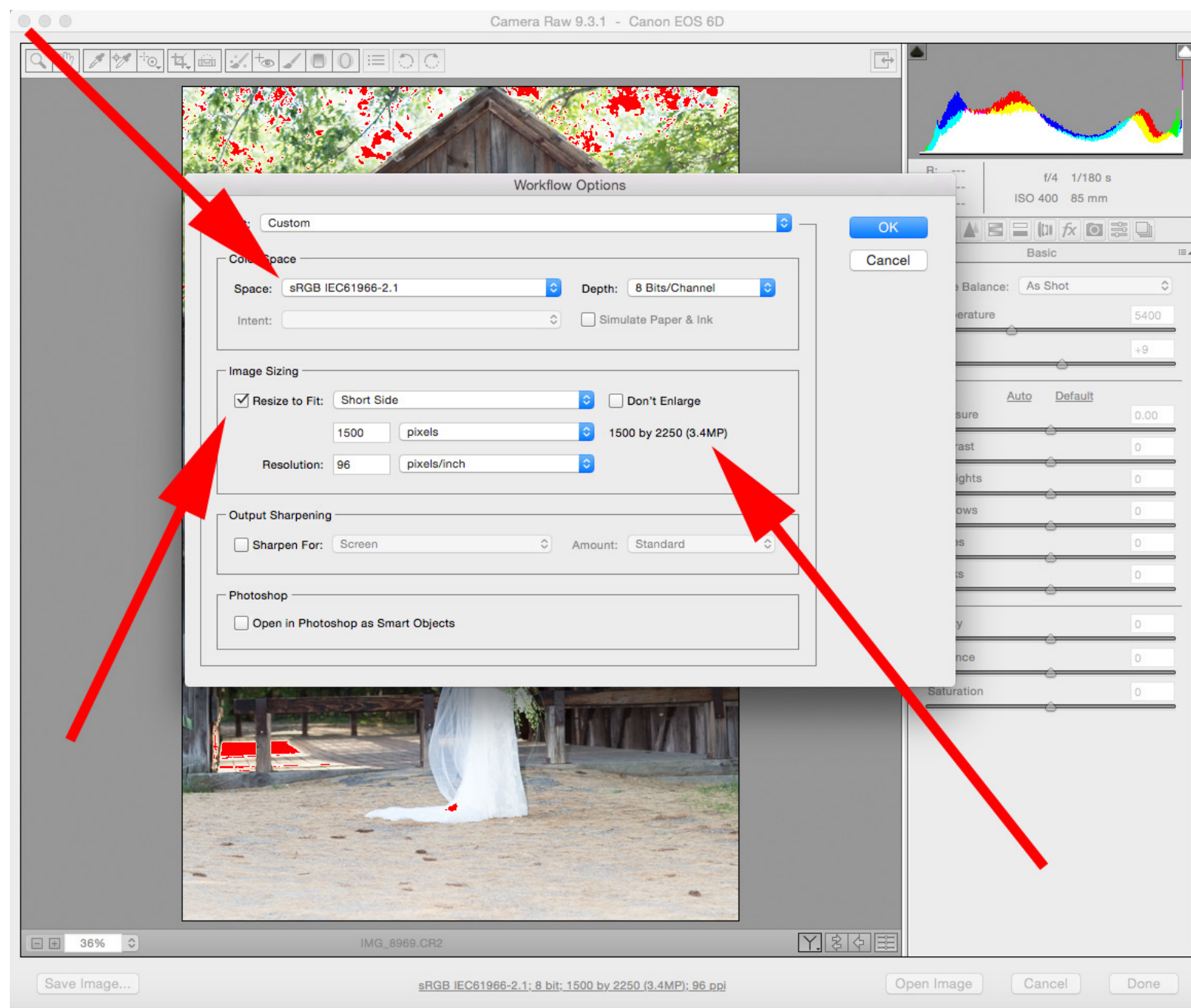


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 007

By clicking on the link, a Workflow Options dialog box is opened. In Reference 007, 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 next photograph that you attempt to open in the Camera Raw Processing Window? We will look at that in Reference 008.

Note: I'm going to just briefly mention something here: With 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 photo industry revolves around sRGB. The entire Internet is sRGB. Every photo lab that I've ever worked with used sRGB (or their own private color profile). I'm sure some of you are going to 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 just love engulfing themselves in technical data, I recommend the above article.

If you're someone who loves taking photographs and NOT engulfing themselves in technical data, then follow my advice and stick with the sRGB color space.

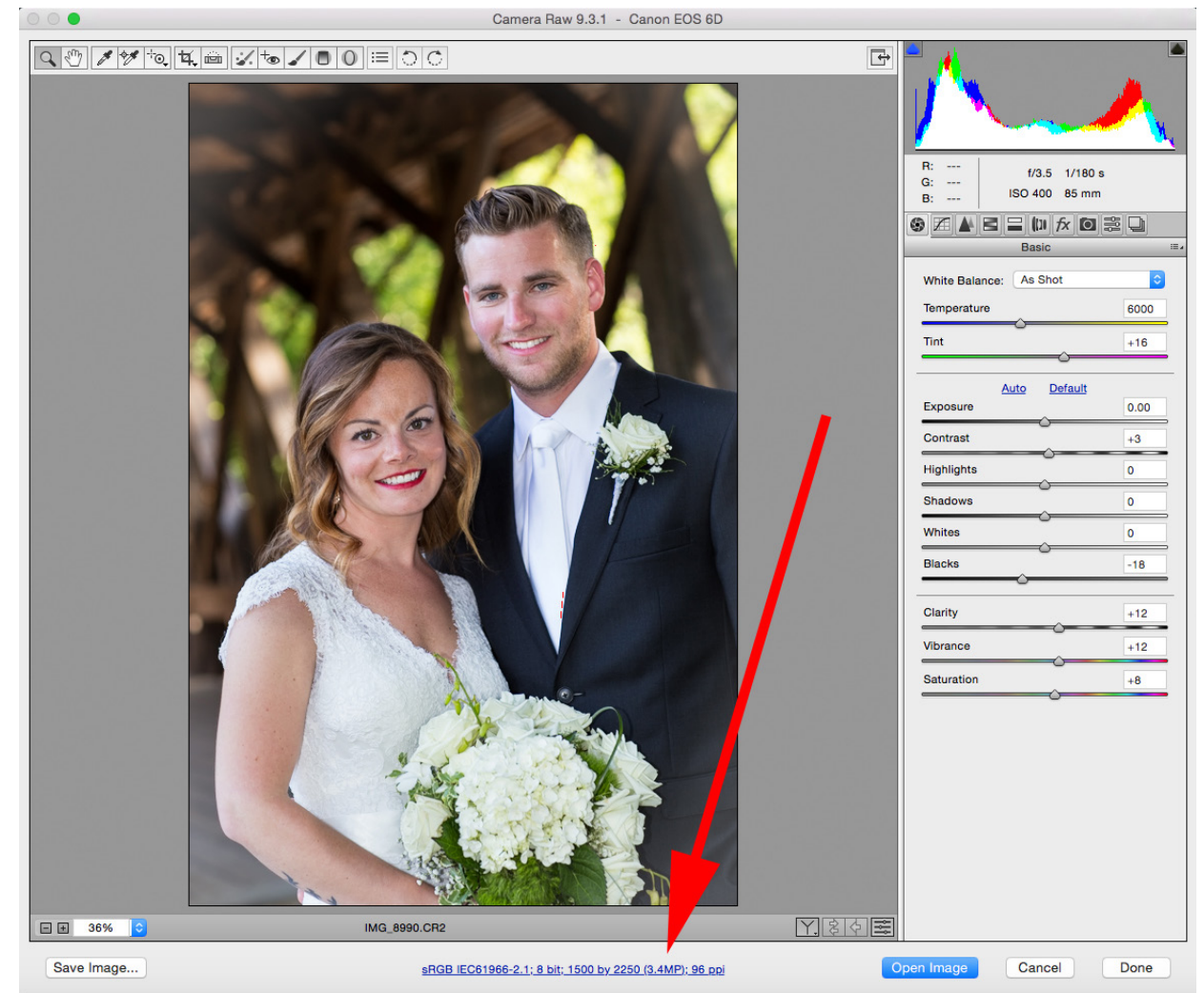


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 008

Now take a look at Reference 008. This is a completely different image. This image, at full resolution, would be 27 MP. But, look at the resolution setting! If I forget to reset back to full resolution, every image that I open into Photoshop is going to open at the lower resolution until it is reset. **Don't forget to reset!**

ELEMENTS

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

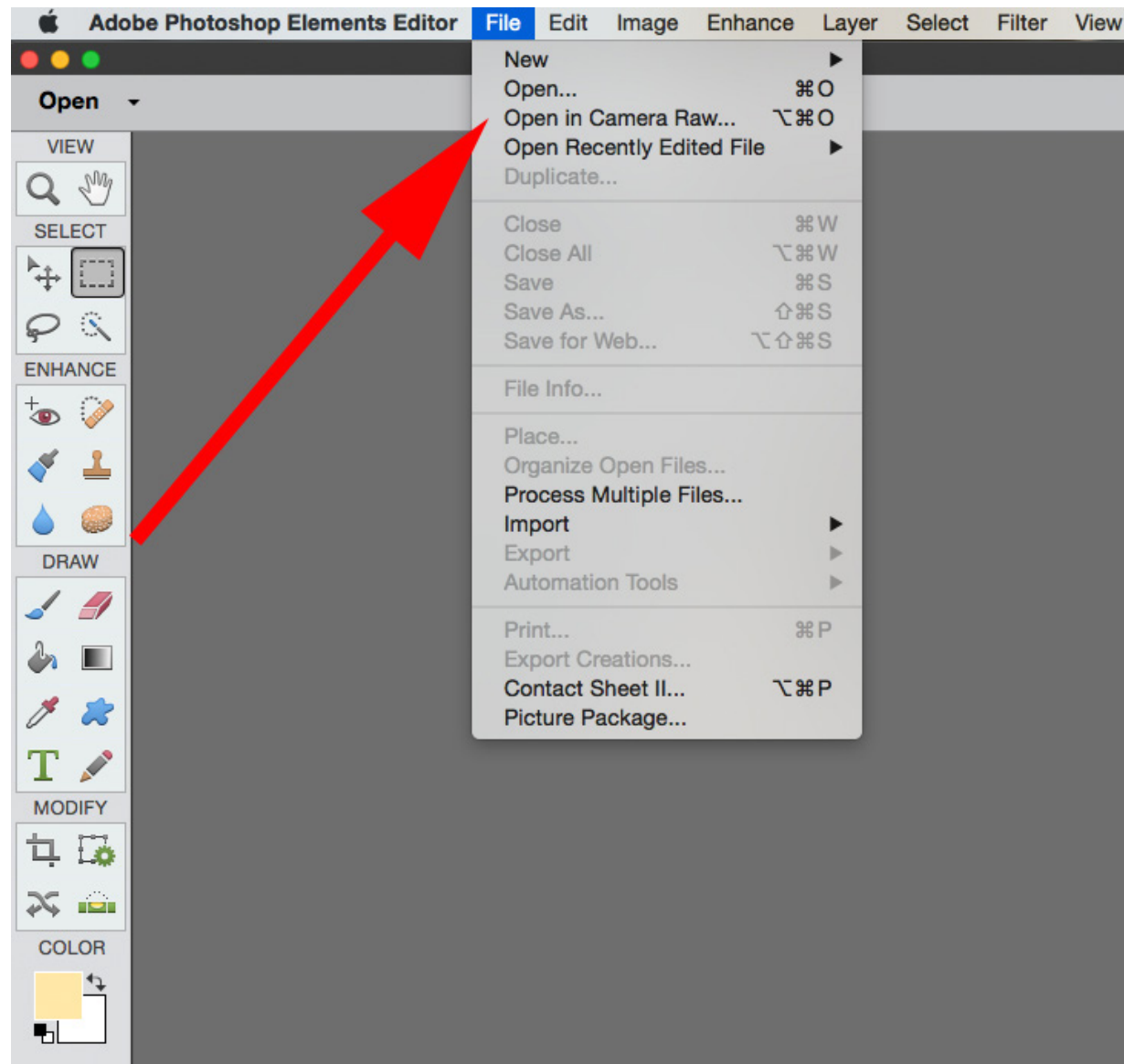


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 009

Open the Adobe Photoshop Elements Editor in the "Expert" mode. Under the "File" sub-menu select "Open in Camera Raw."

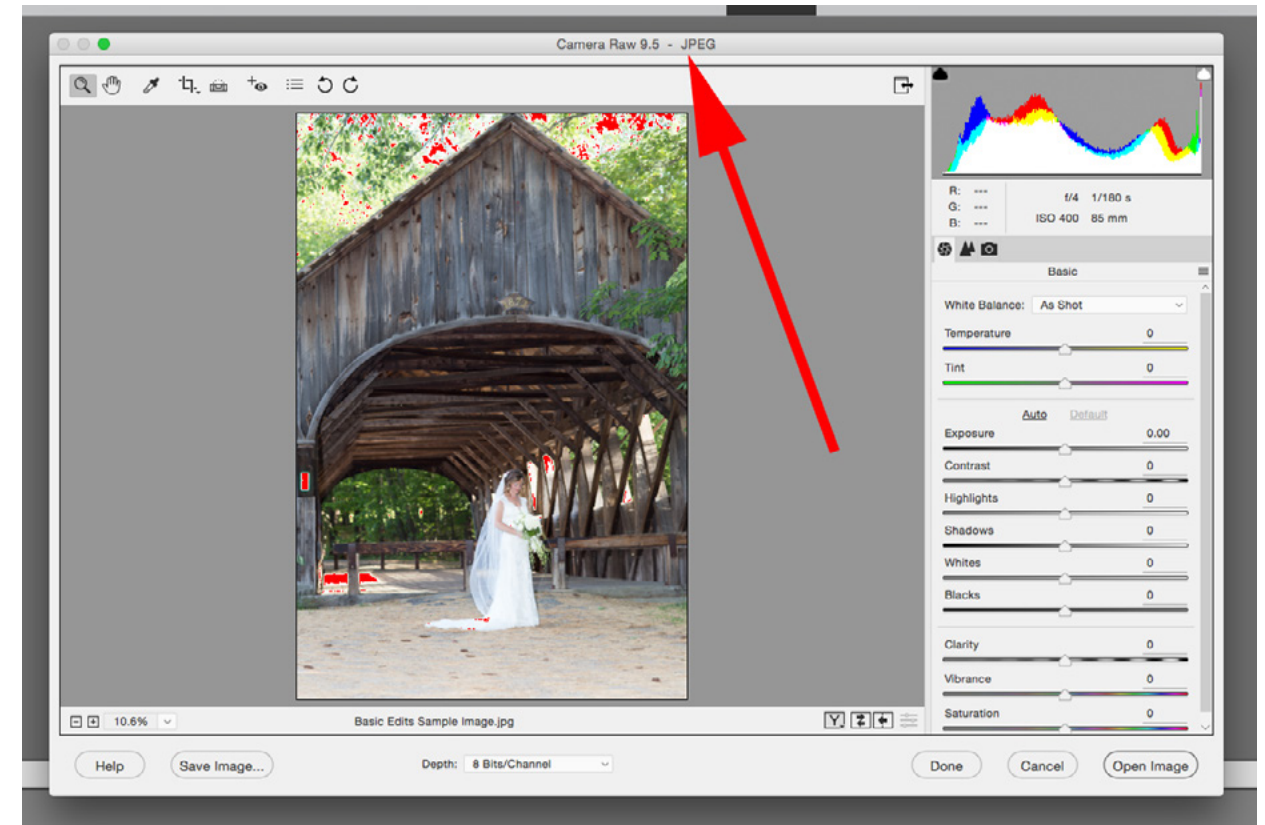


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 010

You will notice that the Elements Camera Raw Processing Window is very similar to the Photoshop version. It's simply missing a few of the tools. 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 that 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 so that it will 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: It's okay to change the resolution setting in the Camera Raw Processing Window and then forget about it 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 Lightroom.

04

THE FUNDAMENTAL EDITS LIST USING PHOTOSHOP

No matter which program we are using, the first thing we have to do is 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

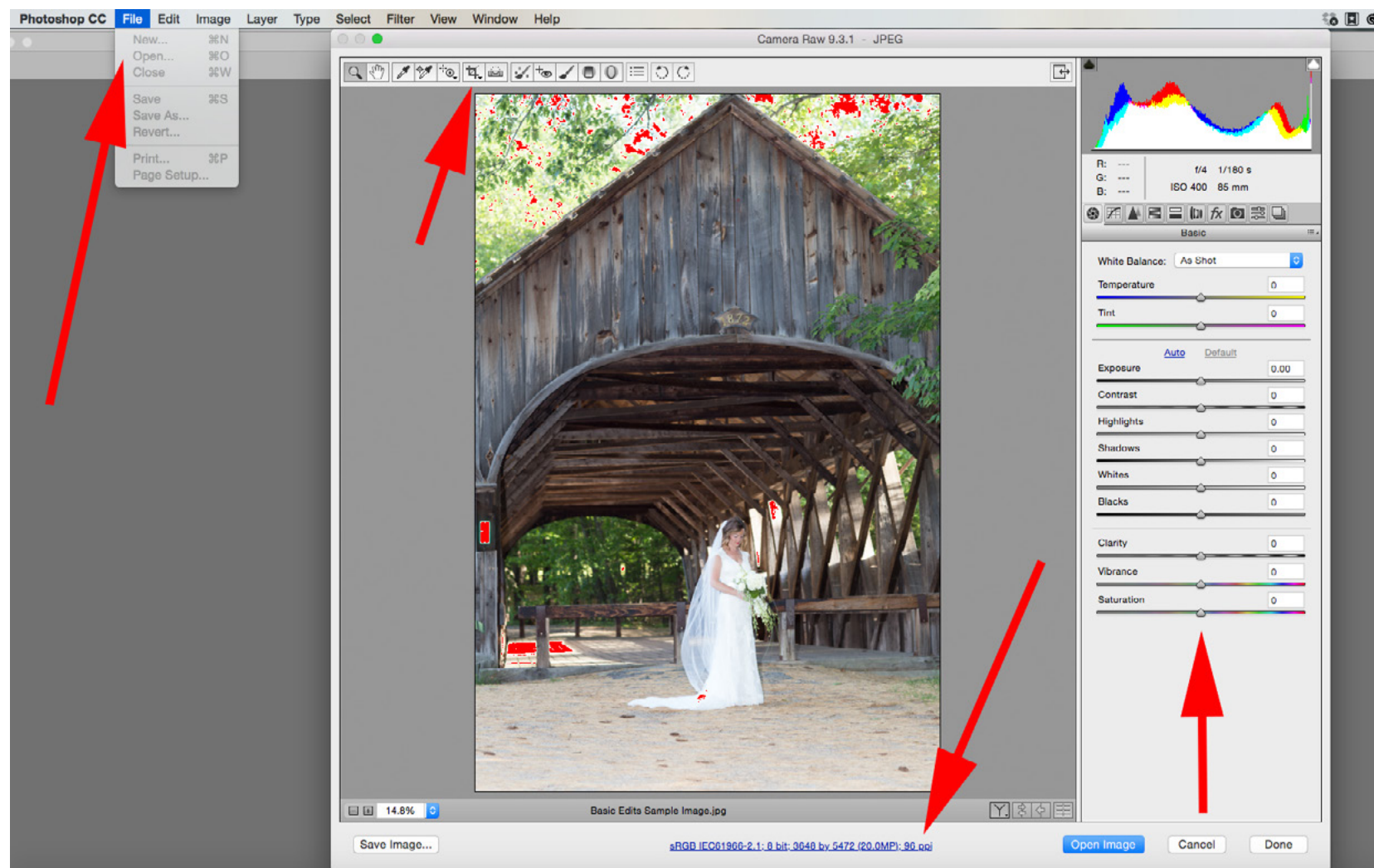


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 011

Since we have already done the work to set up our Photoshop preferences, we can open our file by simply clicking the “File” drop-down menu, navigate to the correct image file, and then click “Open.”

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

- Is the resolution set to the proper setting (the red arrow at the bottom of the Reference 011)? If it is not correct, click the link to open up 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), now is a good time to check that setting as well.
- Are all the sliders on the Fundamental 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 forget at times 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.”
- Finally, the next step in the Fundamental Edits List is always cropping, so click the crop tool.

We are now ready to move on.

Step Two – Crop the Image

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

For example, let's say an image contains 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.

The removal of that bright area would affect the histogram, which will in turn affect your clipping adjustments and exposure adjustments.

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

If your image were perfectly composed within the camera, would you crop the image? NO!

! This is an important lesson! There are no absolutes in photography. Just because you have a Fundamental Edits List it doesn't mean that you have to do every step every time. When it's necessary, do the step. When it's not necessary, 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 cool overlay option that can really help you visualize how well your composition is working!

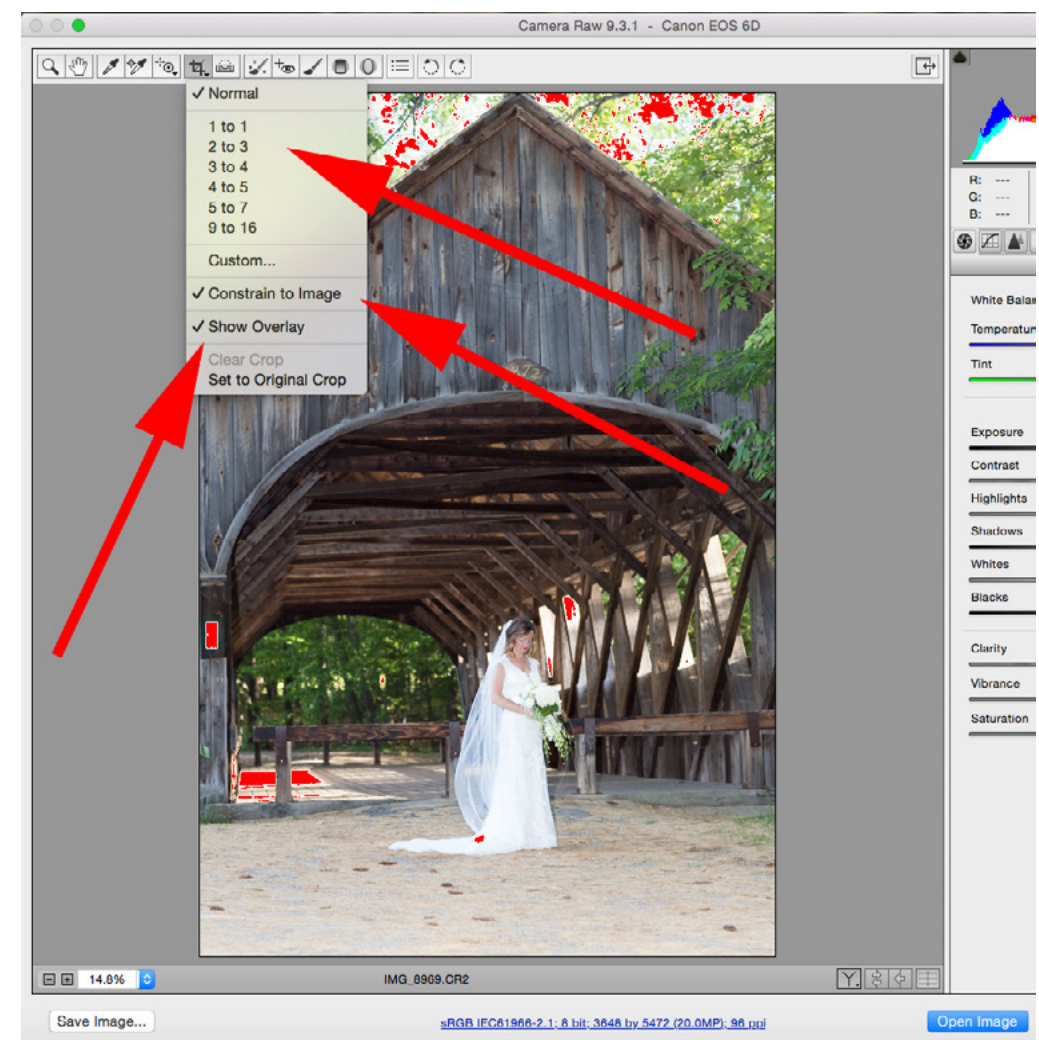



Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 012

Open the Crop drop-down menu by placing your cursor over the small dark triangle in the lower-right corner of the Crop Tool Radio Button. Left click your mouse. Let's talk about the settings.

- Normal means that you can drag the cropping box into any shape that you want.
- All the ratios listed below that are going to "constrain" the crop tool to that ratio. For example, 1 to 1 will be a square. 2 to 3 will be a rectangle that conforms to a 4x6-inch photo print. Using those ratios is important if you have a specific use for your image. Does it need to fit into a frame? Are you printing it to a specific size?
- I've never found the "Constrain to Image" setting to be of any use.
- Check "Show Overlay." I'll show you why in a minute.

 **Recommended Reading:** [Click here if you want some more information from Adobe on the use of the Crop Tool in Camera Raw.](#)

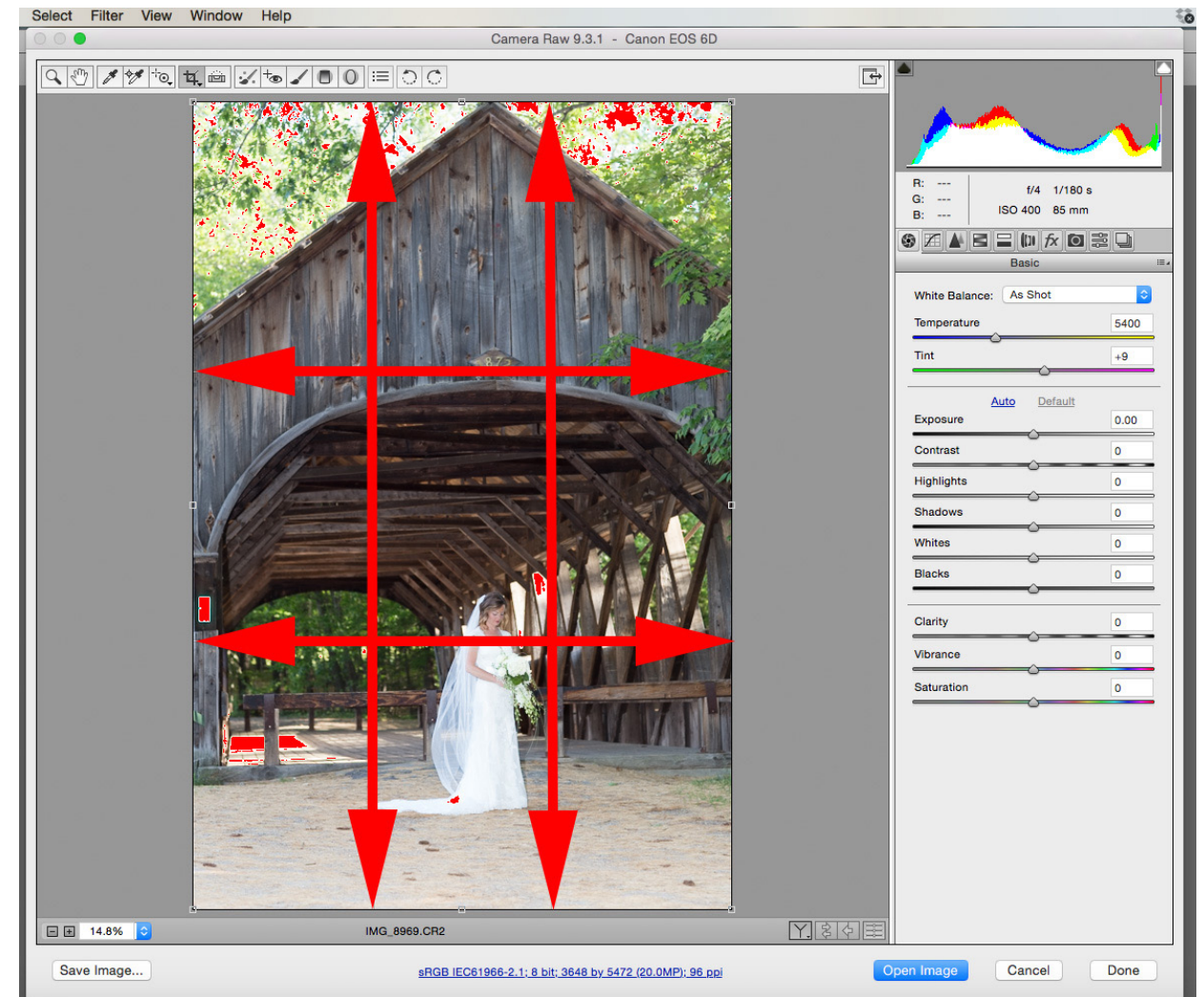


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 013

When you drag the Crop Tool over your image, an overlay showing a "Rule of Thirds" grid will become visible. The lines are very light, 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...

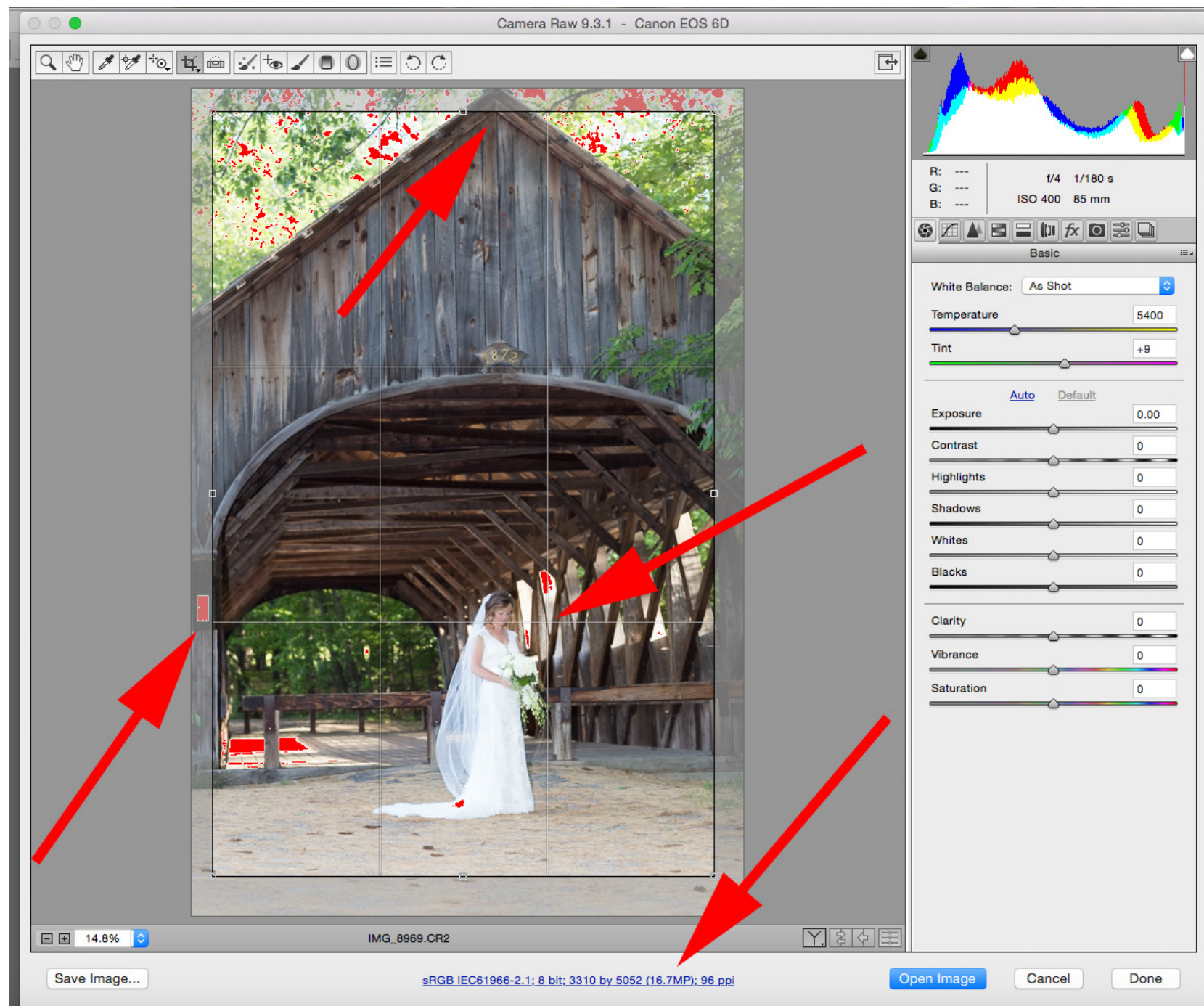


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 014

My goal in cropping this image was to make the bride as dominate 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 freeform the crop. I wanted to make the bride a little larger 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 to.

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

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

There are two 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 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 16.7 MP. That's plenty for any use up to a reasonably large wall portrait. You just want to make sure that you're not cropping off so much of the image that the end user can't use it.


 **Recommended Reading:** [Understanding Composition](#)

Step Three – Noise Reduction

Most of us are aware of third party plugins and apps used to reduce noise. Examples of these would be Nik Define, Topaz Denoise, and Macphun Noiseless CK.

These programs work great! I love them and use them all the time. Many photographers aren't aware that there is a "noise reduction" tool built right 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, as with everything else in the Camera Raw Processing Window, it can be undone at a later date. 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 doing the Fundamental Edits List in the Camera Raw Processing Window, and then later once the image is within Photoshop, more noise may become apparent due to continued editing. It's at that point that I will use a plugin or app to deal with the additional noise.

 **Recommended Software:** For the record, I work on an iMac Computer. My favorite noise reduction software is [Macphun Noiseless CK](#). Click the link if you would like to learn more about it.

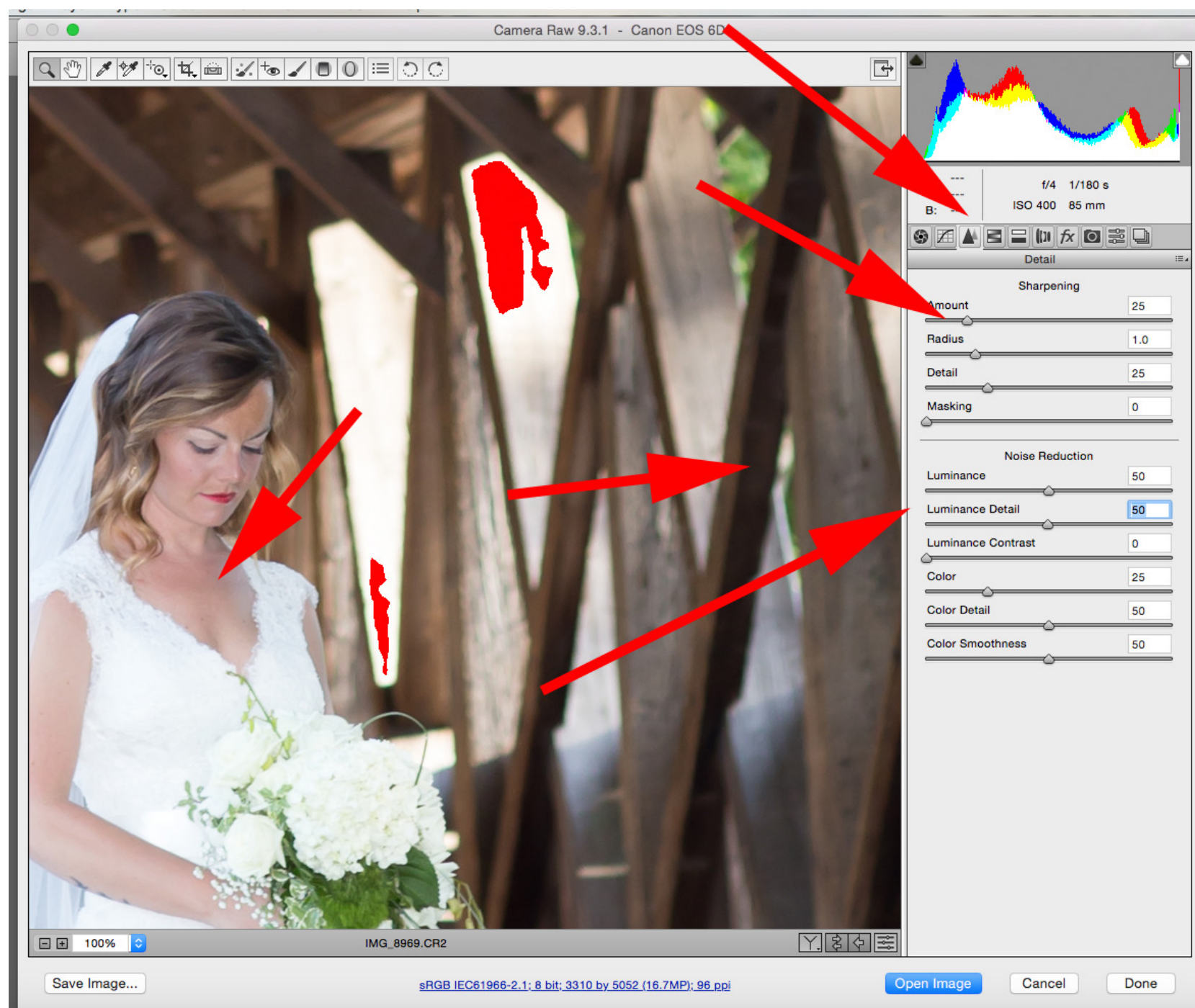


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 015

If you look at the top arrow, you will see that the “Noise Reduction” tool is located within the “Sharpening” tab.

Here are the steps for using the Noise Reduction tool.

1. Set your image view at 100% (see the box in the lower left corner).
2. Scroll around your preview and try to 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 arrows in the middle of Reference 015 (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.
3. Set the “Sharpening” slider from 0 to 25 (whatever looks best). The Chromatic noise sliders default at 25, 50, and 50. Most of the time these settings will work fine. I like to have complete control, so generally I move them all to

0 and set them myself. If you're interested in seeing the procedure for removing Chromatic Noise, read the Lightroom section.

4. Gradually begin raising the Luminance slider under Noise Reduction while watching the areas that you identified with noise.

⚠ Important Point: If you have to raise the slider above 50 to make the noise disappear,—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 50 eliminated the noise.

5. The Luminance Detail slider will default to a setting of 50 when you begin to raise the Luminance slider. Move the Luminance Detail slider up and down until you achieve maximum detail without bringing the noise back into the picture. In this case, a setting of 50 worked well.

There are two different types of noise: Luminance Noise and Chroma Noise.


All of the sliders below the Luminance Contrast slider are related to Chroma Noise.

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 Edits List.


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

Exposure adjustment is a very critical step in the Fundamental Edits List. The exposure will determine how your image will look to others on the Internet, and even more importantly it will play a major 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 important tools available to you in your editing software is the histogram. The histogram is not biased in any way; it simply shows you what is a fact, the "fact" being what is the brightness level of every pixel in your image and how are they distributed. That being said, a histogram does not have a sense of creativity. You must develop your own "feel" for what the histogram is telling 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'm going to give you some percentage ratios as to how much weight I would give to the histogram versus what you are seeing 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 very little 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 that 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: [Datacolor S5P100 Spyder5PRO](#).

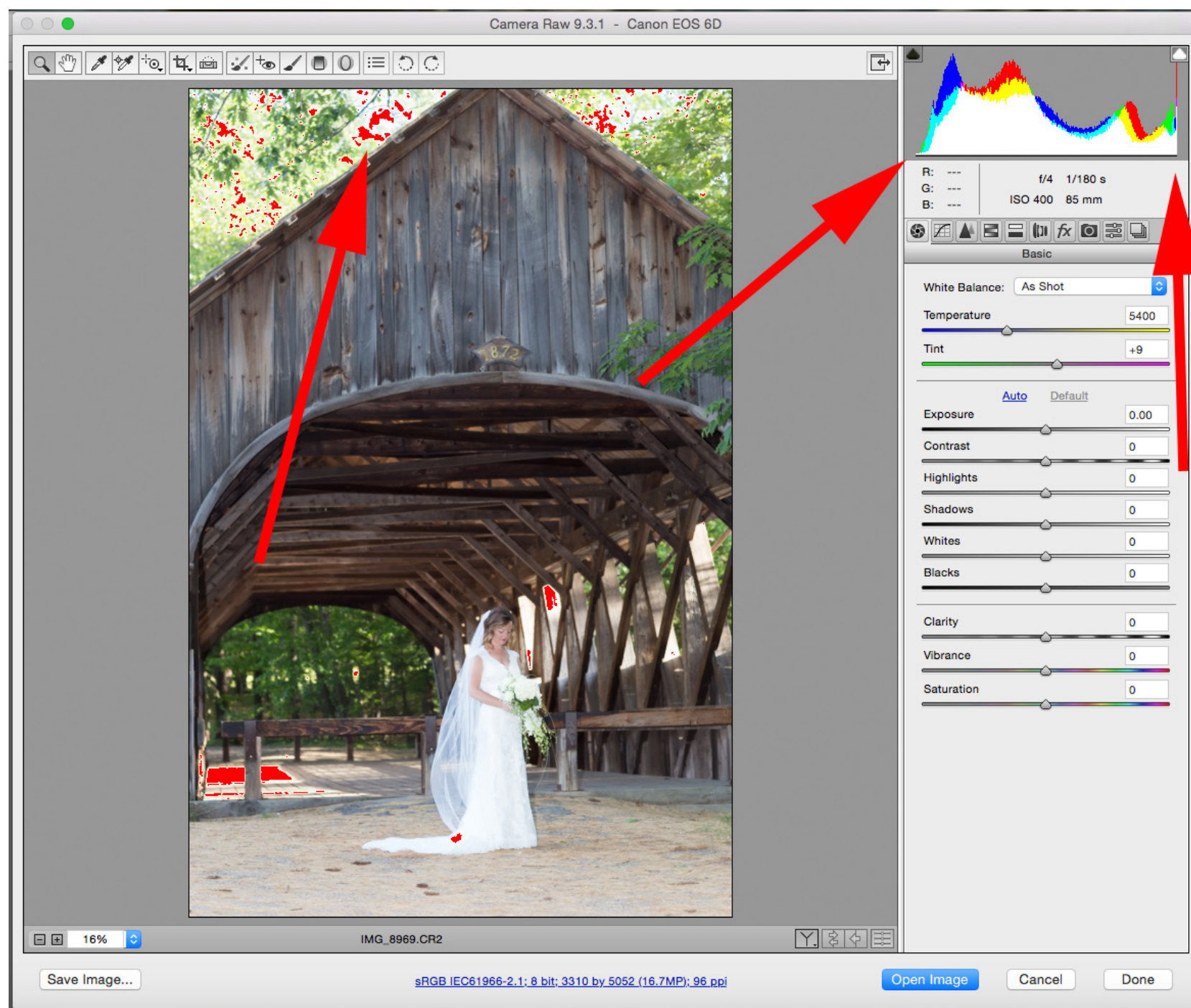


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 016

The first step in global exposure adjustment is to evaluate our image, and our histogram.

- Regarding 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. If the final image is not going to have a full range of tone for aesthetic reasons, then you must take that into account when going to the next step, which is evaluating the histogram.
- Regarding the Histogram, in this bridal portrait, we want a full range of tone, 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 particular image) is telling us that the shadow areas are falling within the range of the histogram scale (the middle

arrow above shows us this). The highlights, however, are being “clipped off” (the right arrow show us this). Notice how the highlight end of the scale abruptly ends. It looks like someone cut it off with a pair of scissors. It doesn’t “end” at the end of the scale like the shadow side does. This indicates that the highlights have been “clipped.” What does clipping mean? It means that detail is being lost in your image. In this case, some areas of light tone, that would have detail, will appear, and print, as pure white. This is not good. Earlier, we turned our clipping indicators on. The left arrow shows how the clipping indicator gives you a red mask, showing you where the clipping is occurring.

! A very important point: While the histogram can change drastically based on what lighting and effects are going on in the photograph, clipping on either end is always bad. Whenever possible, we want to make exposure adjustments that eliminate extensive clipping. Sometimes, you may not be able to eliminate the extensive clipping if your camera exposure was way off.

For fun, I lowered the shadow values so that you could see what that clipping indicator looks like.

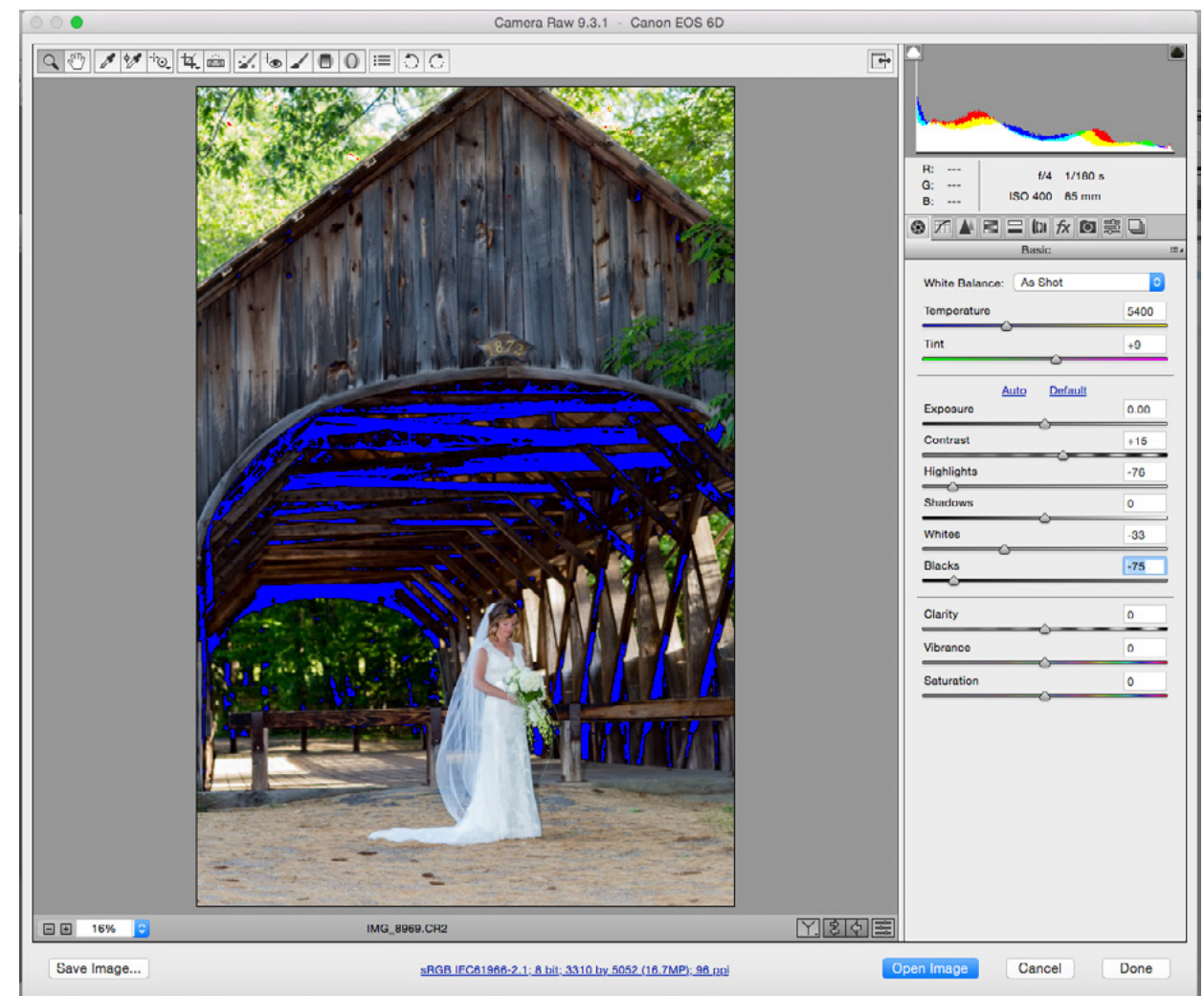


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 017

After doing our evaluation, these are the concerns:

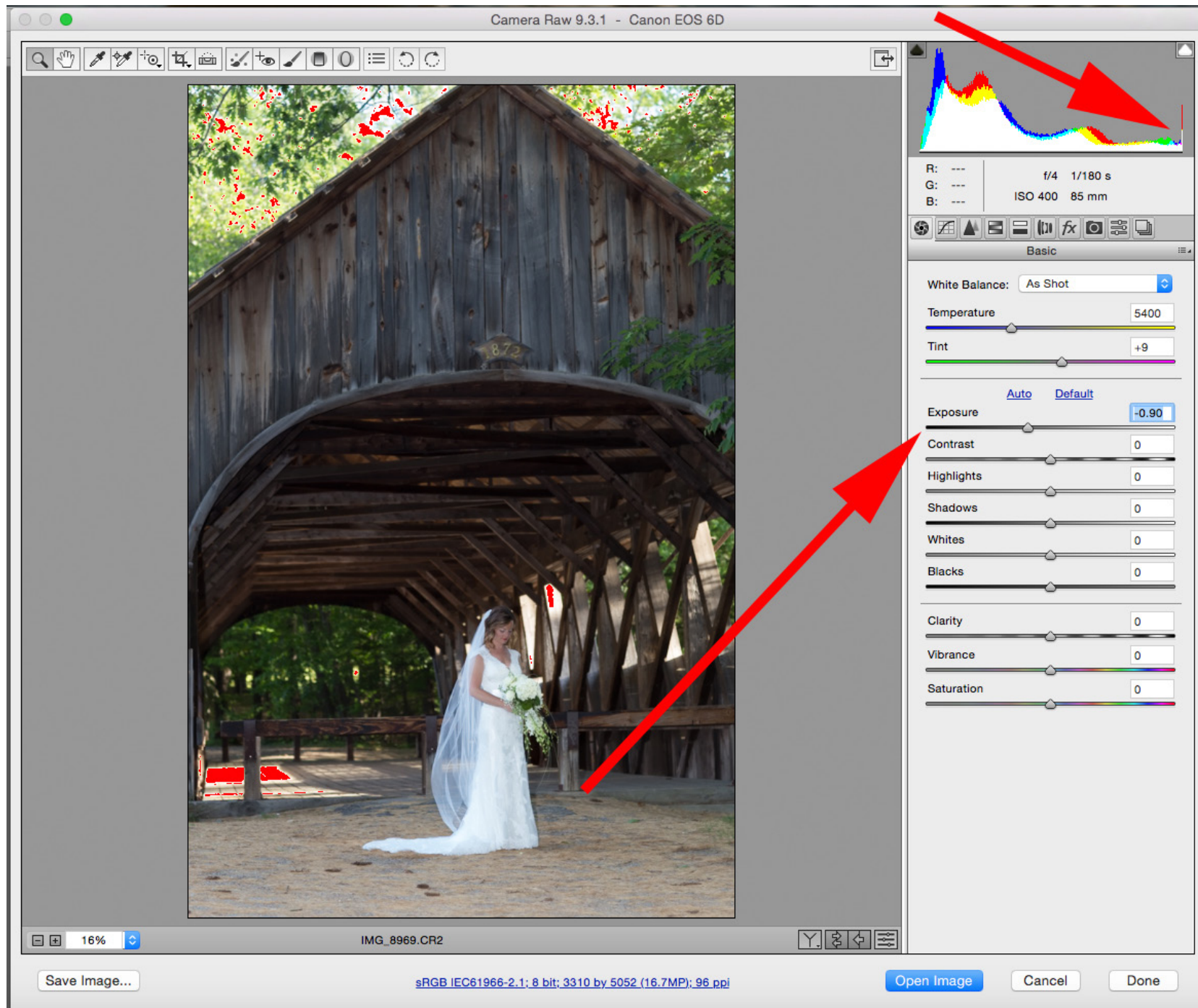


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 018

Photographers that 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 affects the entire image. In Reference 018, 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 clipping was not completely eliminated. Fortunately, one of the super powers 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 broader range of dark tones.
- The Whites slider affects a broader range of light tones.
- The Blacks slider affects the very deepest black tones

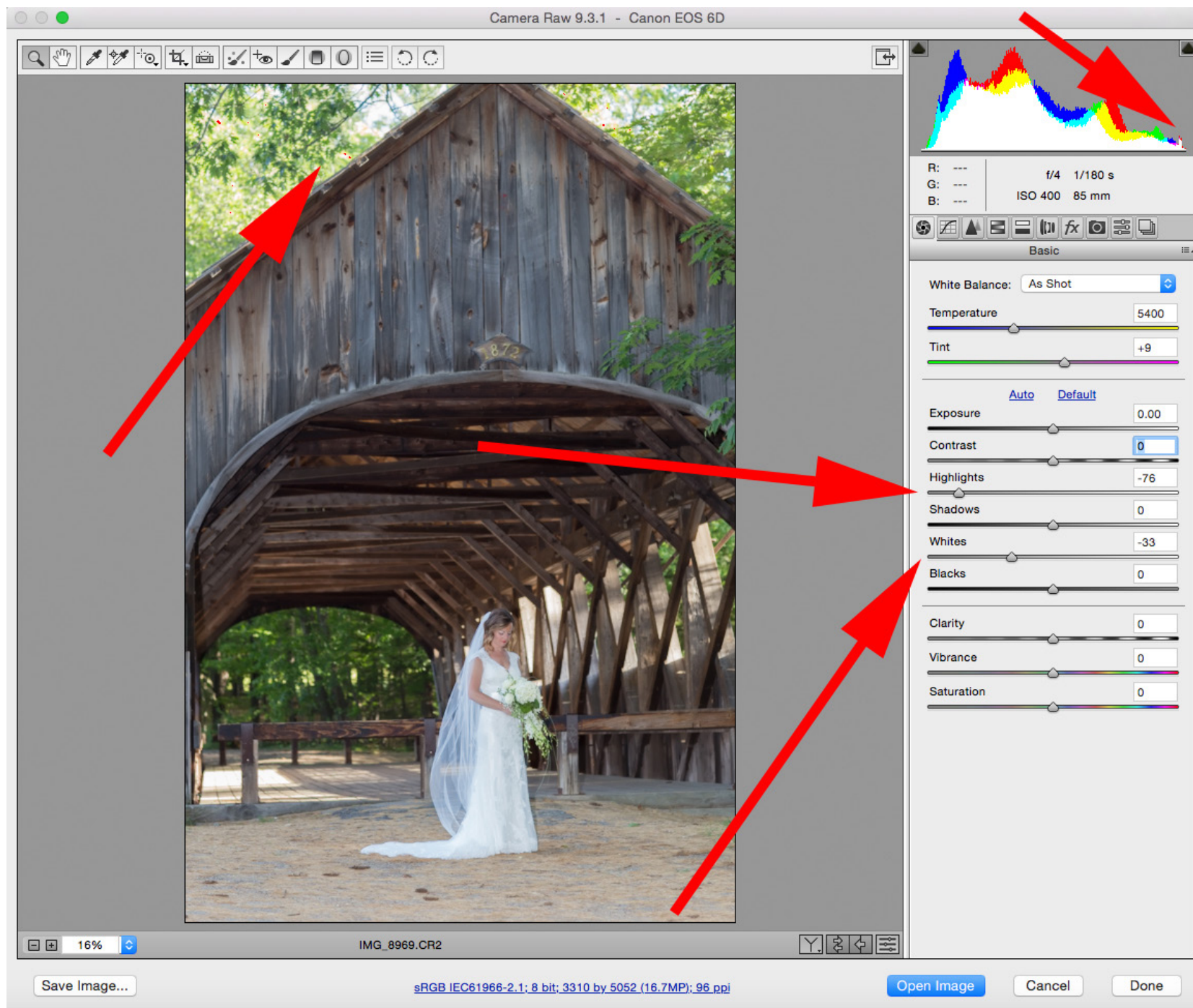


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 019

In Reference 019, you will see that the clipping is 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 shows a few tiny spots of clipping indicator. It's always good to leave just a few tiny little spots of clipping indicator on both ends. By doing so, you know that your image will display a full range of tone from the deepest black to the brightest white while still portraying maximum detail in all the tones. By leaving just a little bit of "Highlight Clipping Indicator," we have set our "White Point." What is the White Point? It is the maximum white within the photograph. Unless you're doing a special effect, the White Point should typically be a small nondescript area within the image. In this image, it's a little bit of the sky. Why don't we want the bride's dress and veil to be the White Point? They're white! If we set the White Point there, her dress and veil would lose all detail. The White Point sets "Pure White."

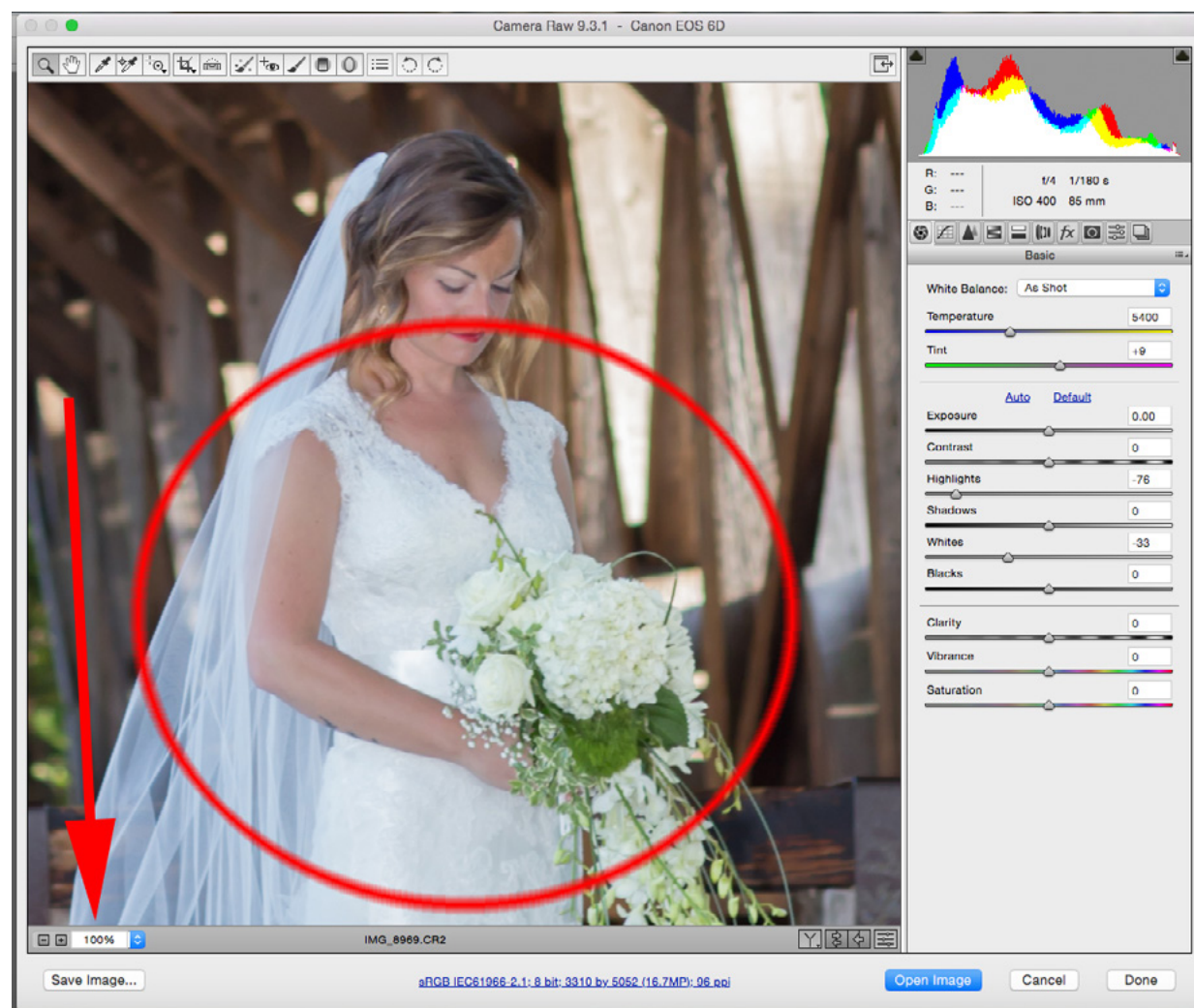


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 020

If an important part of your photograph is in the highlight or shadow end of the histogram scale, 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 make sure we see detail, and that we didn't miss any clipping indicator in these important areas. You probably noticed that in reducing the Highlights and Whites sliders the dress, veil, and flowers shifted in color toward the blue spectrum. Don't worry. We will address that in another step.

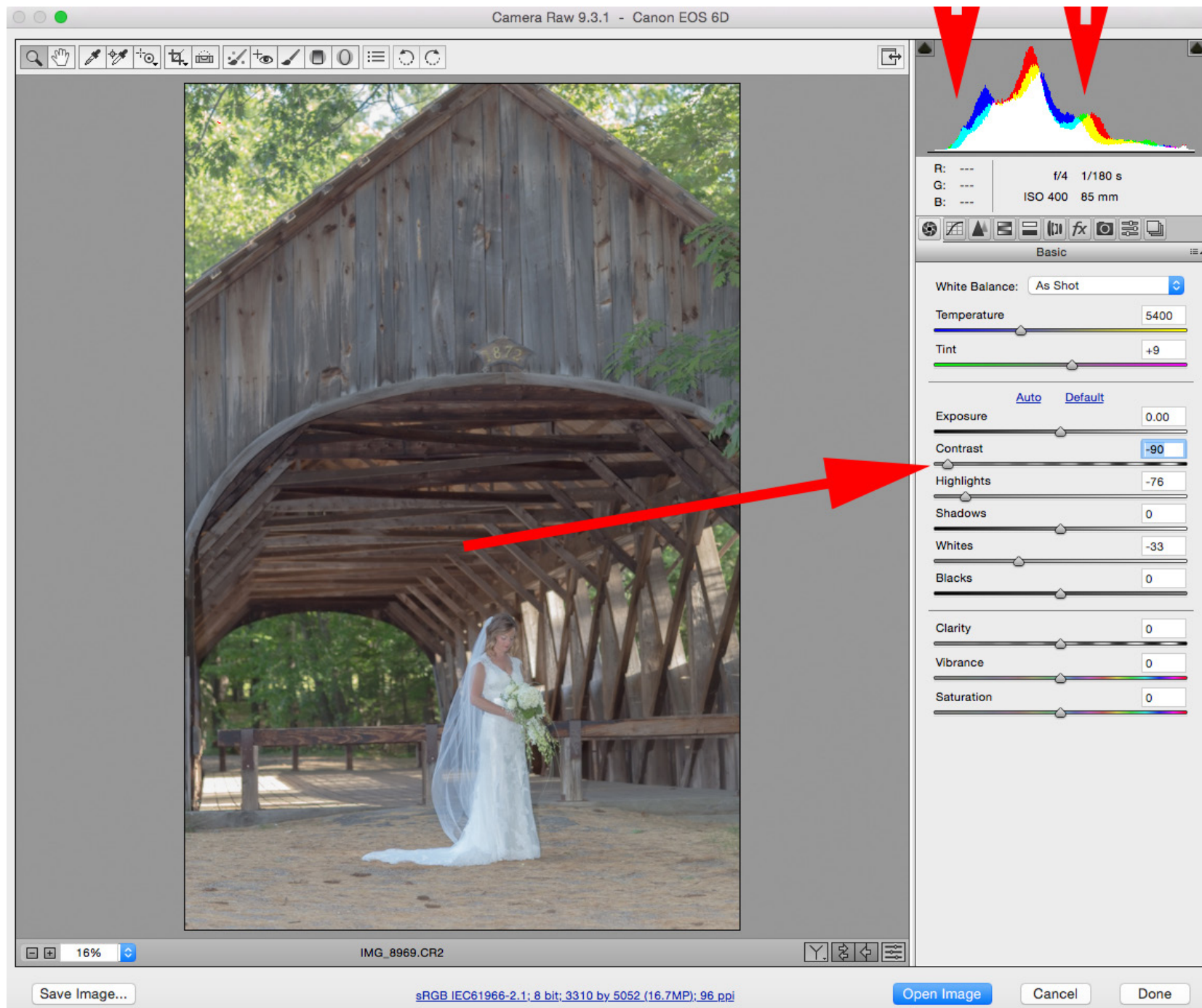
The last step for the global exposure adjustment is contrast.

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

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

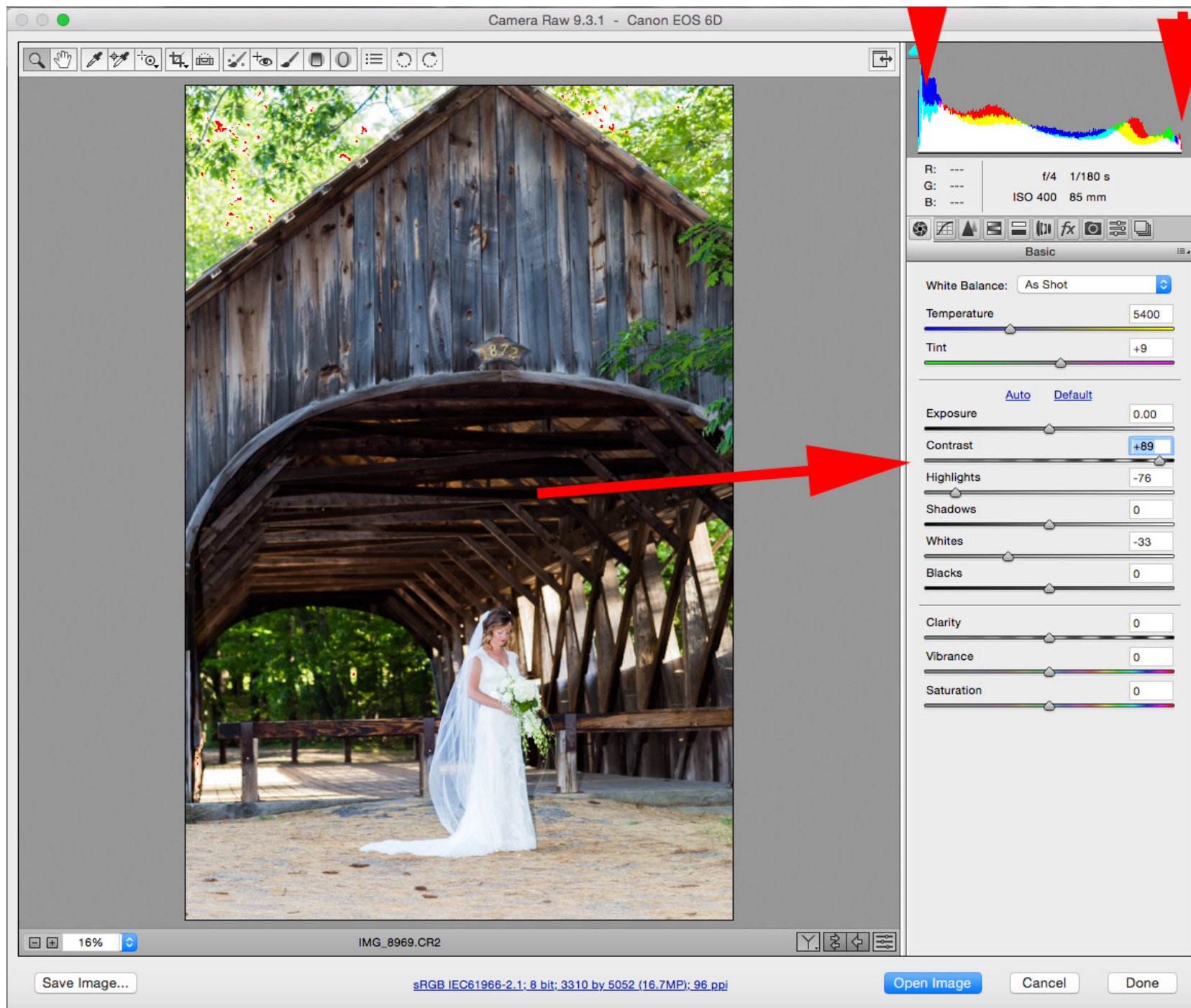
From experience, I know that this image needs a slight boost in contrast. Go back to Reference 020 and study the histogram for a moment.

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



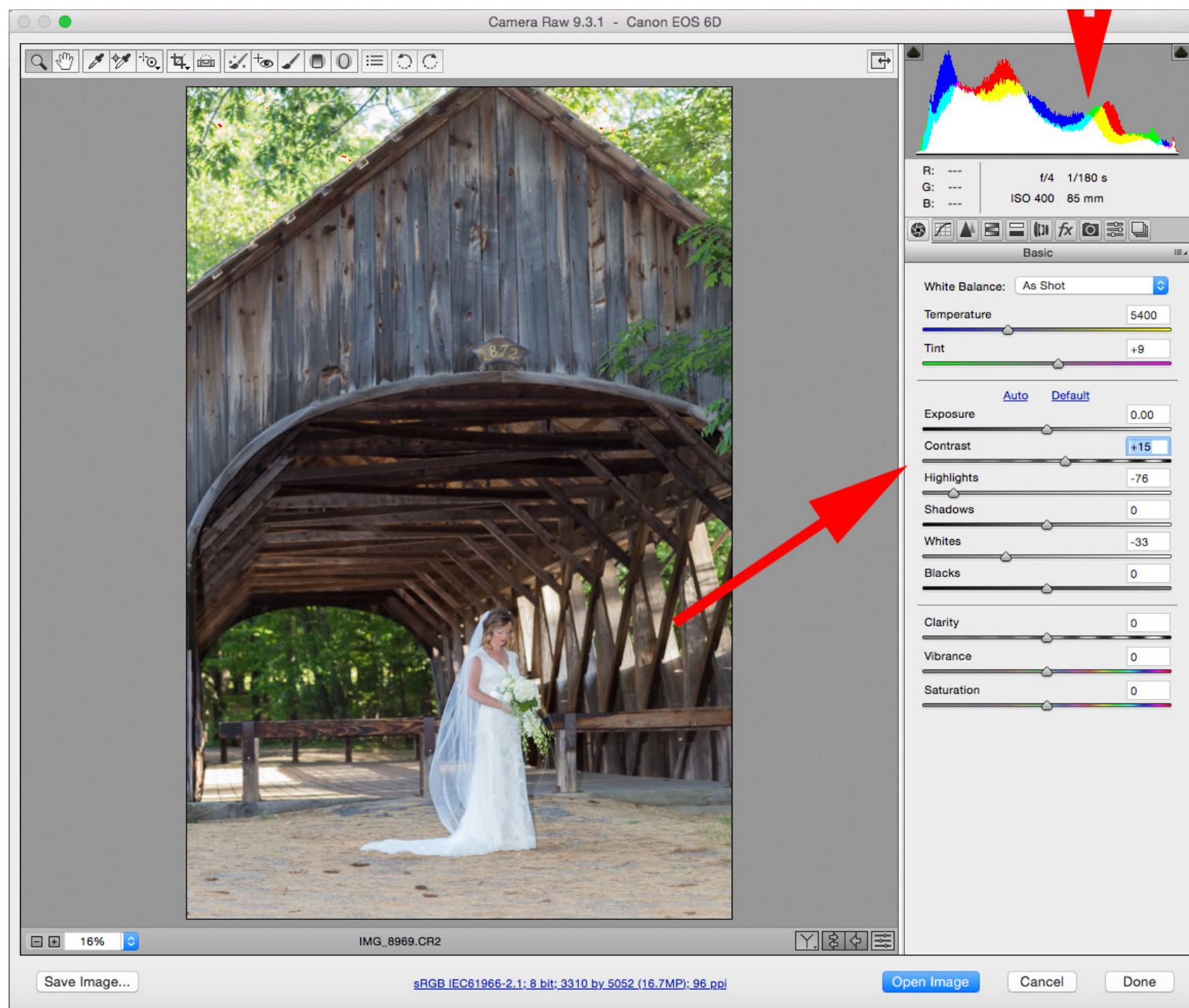
In Reference 021, I have reduced the contrast. Look at the histogram. Do you see how the “mountain range” (scale) has shortened up? It’s short at both ends with several peaks grouped together. This indicates low contrast. Now, that group of peaks could be positioned all the way to the left, it could also be positioned all the way to the right, and it could be anywhere in the middle. Low contrast is indicated by a tightly grouped set of peaks and the rest of the scale is low.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 021



In Reference 022, I have moved the contrast 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 with long valleys between them, this indicates high contrast.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 022



In Reference 023, I have adjusted the contrast to +15. I made this determination from experience, studying the histogram, and visually looking at the photograph. Most of the change to the histogram occurred to the left of the red arrow on the histogram.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 023

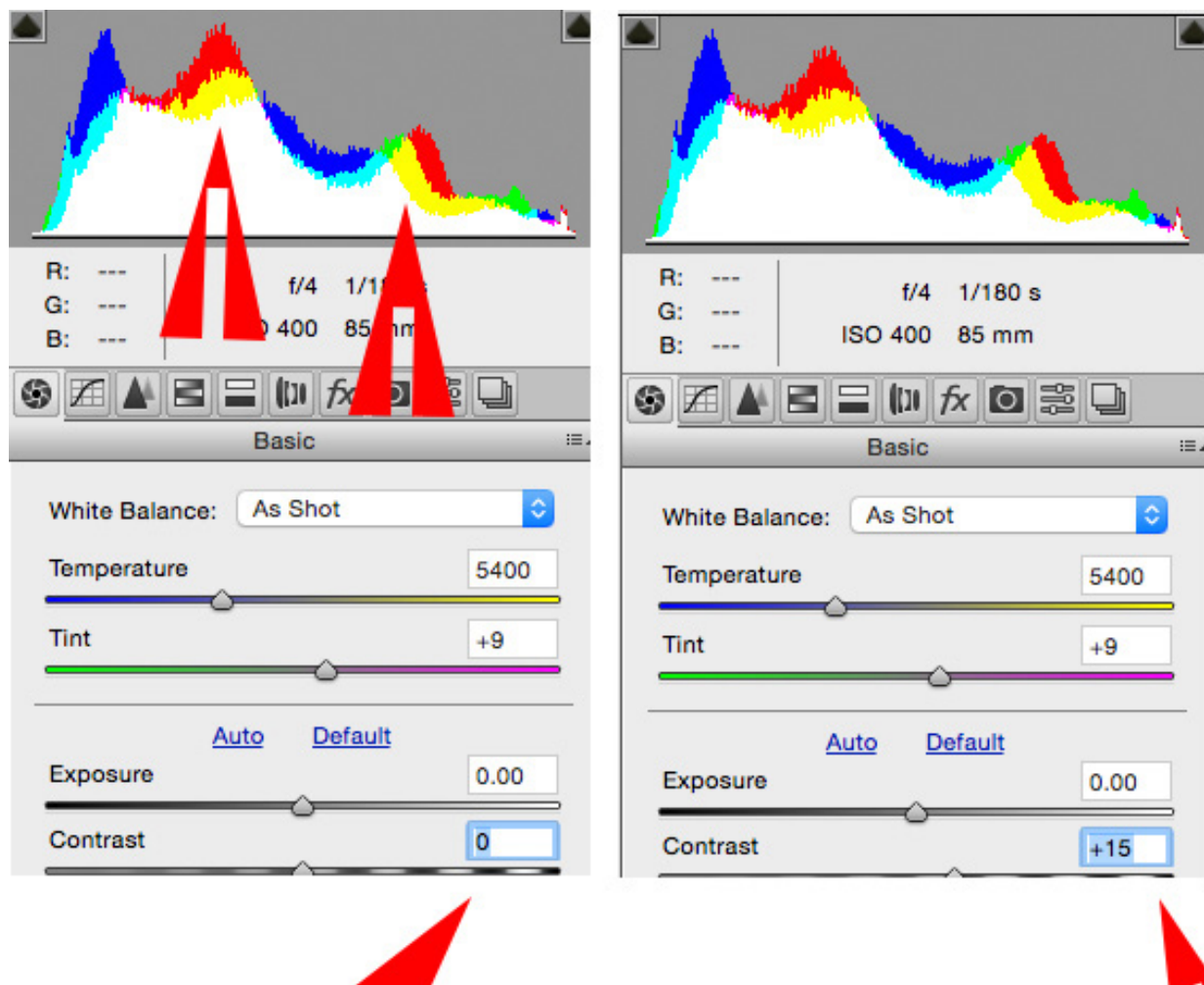


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 024

In Reference 024, you can see the histogram before the change in contrast, and after the change in contrast. It's pretty subtle. This is where experience will train you. However, now you will know what to look for.

There is one last major point 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 (or as mentioned earlier, absolute white).

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

You don't want **large areas, or important areas**, of your photograph to be at the Black point or the White Point. You only want some small area to be within that range. Why do we worry about this?

It prevents your image from having muddy or blown out highlights and conversely pale or dense blacks.

For example, if you photographed a black cat on a black silk cloth background, the vast majority of the tones are going to be in the deep shadow to black spectrum. BUT! We still only want a very 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 the 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 of the light toned, highlight areas will have texture, but those small spots in the sky will be pure white.

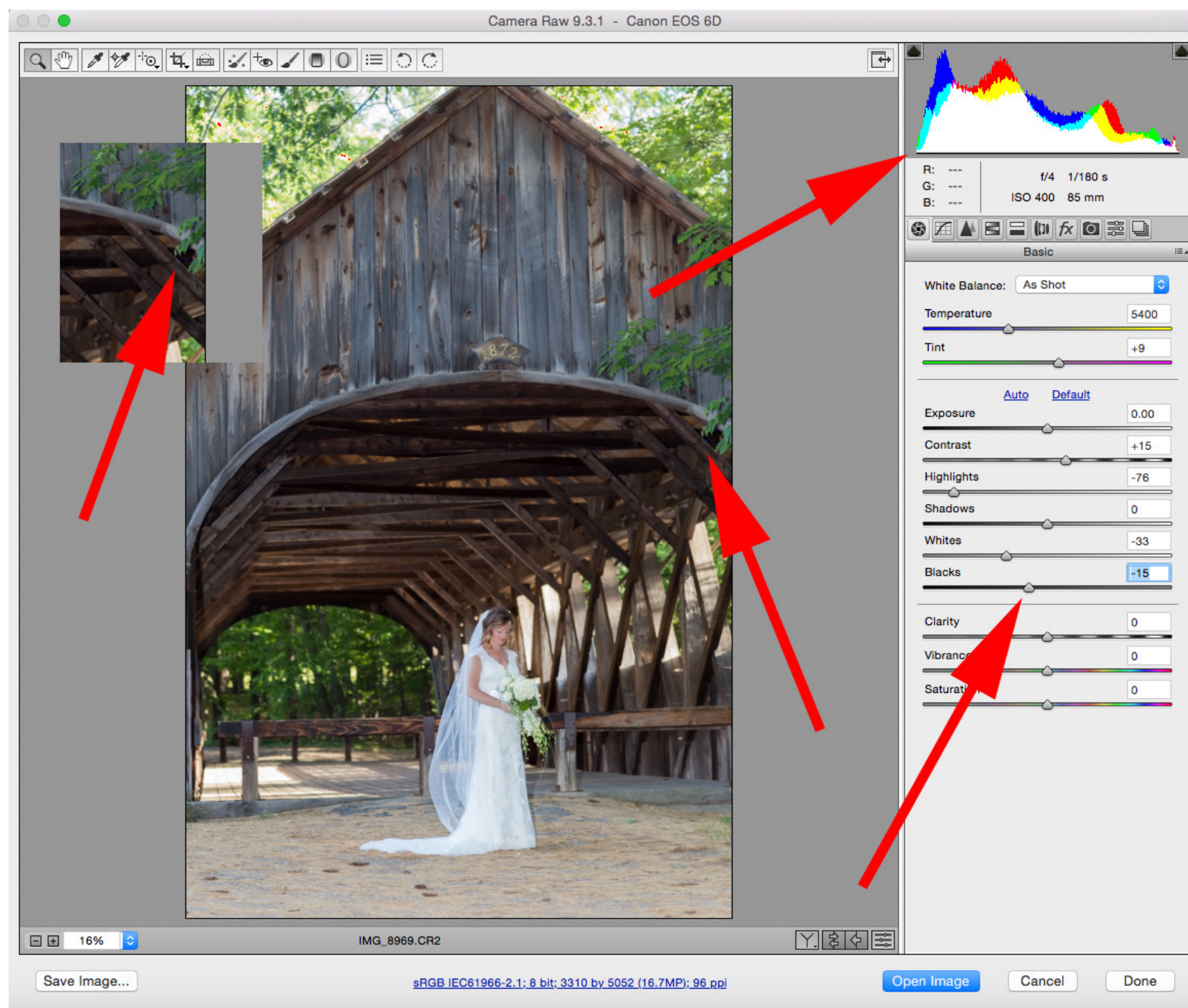


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 025

Now we need to set the Black Point. Remember, earlier there was no Black Clipping indicator. We're going to tweak the blacks down until we get just a tiny little bit of the Black Clipping Indicator (which is a blue mask).

By adjusting the Blacks down to -15, a tiny little bit of the Shadow Clipping Indicator has appeared in the rafters of the bridge. It's so tiny that it might be hard for you to see. But trust me, it's there. We have now set our Black Point.

Steps Seven and Eight – Color Temperature and Color Tint

When we take our 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 makes a calculation as to what it thinks is the best White Balance setting.

Recommended Reading: If the previous paragraph sounded a little bit like Greek to you, then you may wish to check out this Photzy publication: [Understanding Light: Book One](#). This book covers everything that you need to know about light- including Color Balance and Kelvin Temperature.

The Temp and Tint sliders are there to correct for problems that occurred when the photograph was taken. In other words, the White Balance setting on the camera misjudged, was miss-set, or simply could not compensate for the color temperature of the light that was present when the photograph was taken.

Hopefully, this will make sense to you. Each of these terms—color balance, color temperature, and white balance—all have specific meanings. However, in the broad range of digital photography, they are all essentially talking about the same thing.

It's important to know that because people tend to use these terms interchangeably. In a Fundamental Edits List, all three of these terms are referring to what the color of your image is.

And to make things worse, this is an area of photo editing that has 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 darn sure that the "red" in their logo is correct.

For what we're trying to achieve—our wedding bridal portrait—the color must be pleasing and reasonably accurate. The pleasing part is where the voodoo comes in, because none of us see colors exactly the same. Once again, this is where the histogram is your helper.

Just 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.

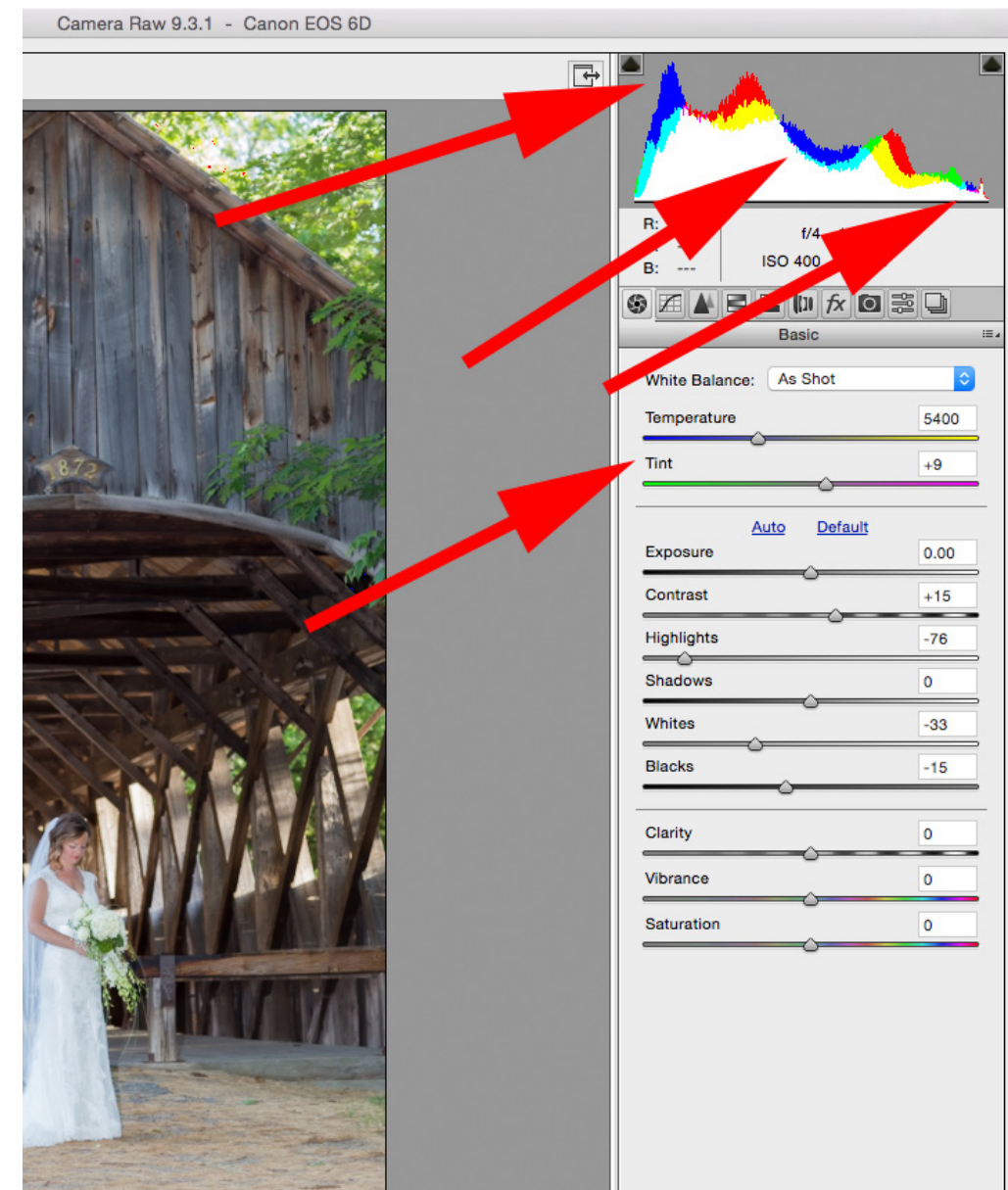


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 026

Reference 026 is a screenshot showing some of 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 White Balance setting was set to "Auto." The camera tried to come up with the best alternative between "the shade light," the fill flash, and the warm sunshine on 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 bit in the highlights.
3. Our White Balance drop-down menu is set at "As Shot." I use this setting 99% of the time. The other settings skew the color without any consideration as to what the image truly looks like, or what we're trying to achieve. I avoid these blanket settings, and so should you.
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 it takes into account your chosen Color Space profile.

If there were no requirements for the color of your image other than how you'd like it to look, 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. This is unless you're doing a special effect, or you had some really funky lighting when you shot your picture.

However, with our bridal portrait, we do need to have some assurance to a standard of color. It is likely that this image will be printed, placed into a photo album, and viewed next to other images shot at the same wedding.

Here is how we accomplish that.

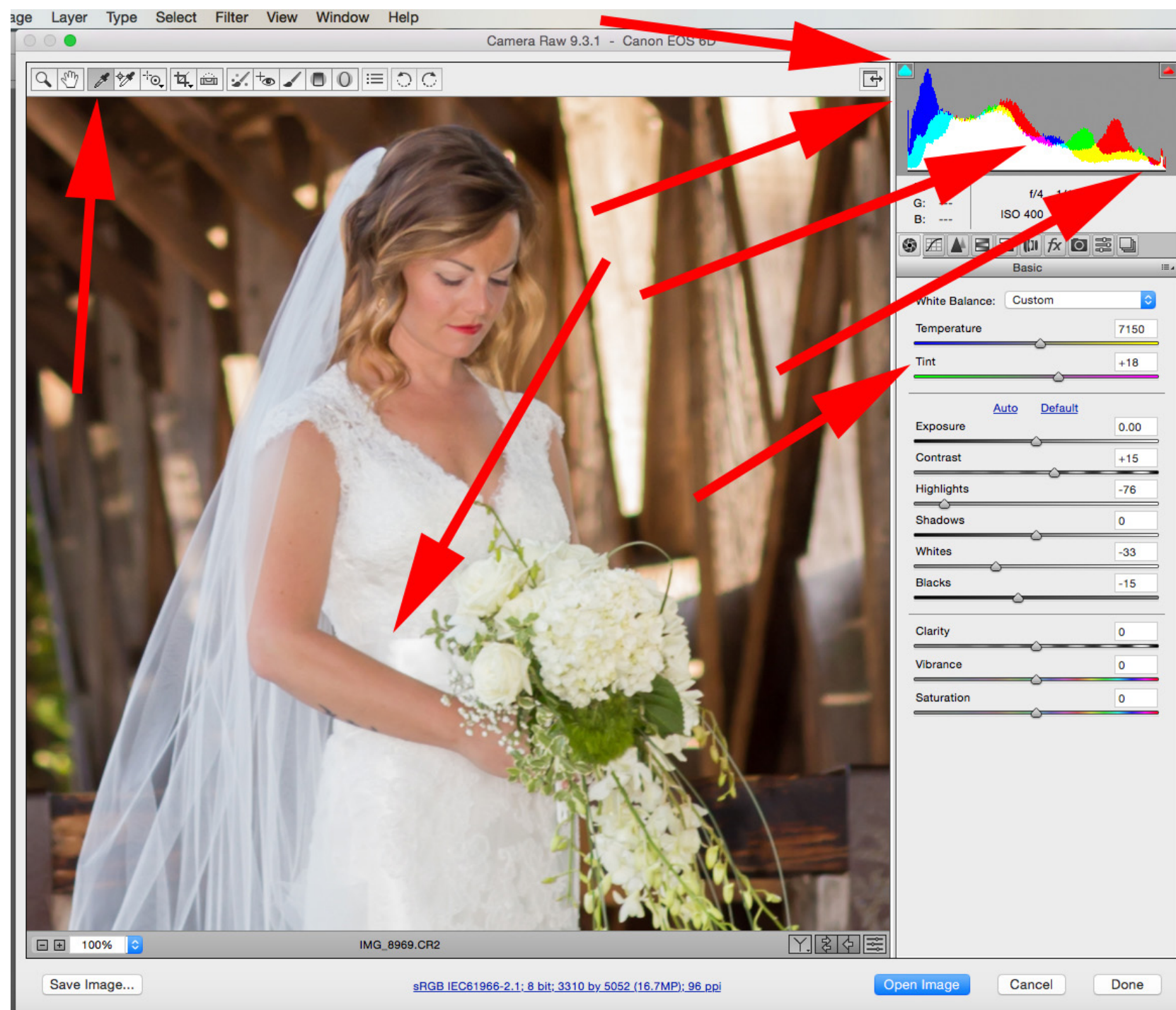


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 027

Let's go about adjusting the color Temperature and Tint on this bridal portrait.

In Reference 027, look at the far left arrow; this is the "White Balance" tool. It works by left clicking your mouse on an area of white or 18% gray. When exacting color is required, professional photographers will often place an 18% gray card within the frame, so that they can click on that spot and know that it is 18% gray. They would then remove the card through cropping or cloning. For most of us, we don't need to take it that far. In this image, we are lucky, because there were natural areas of white and gray within the scene. If you're working on your own images, and there isn't any apparent area of white or 18% gray, find a spot that appears to be the closest tonal value to your mind's eye and click on it. You may get some pretty funky color adjustments (which I'm going to show you in a moment). If you don't like the color, simply undo your action. Under these circumstances, it is probably best to just adjust the Temperature and Tint by eye. (By the way, this is another reason why using a color monitor calibration tool is

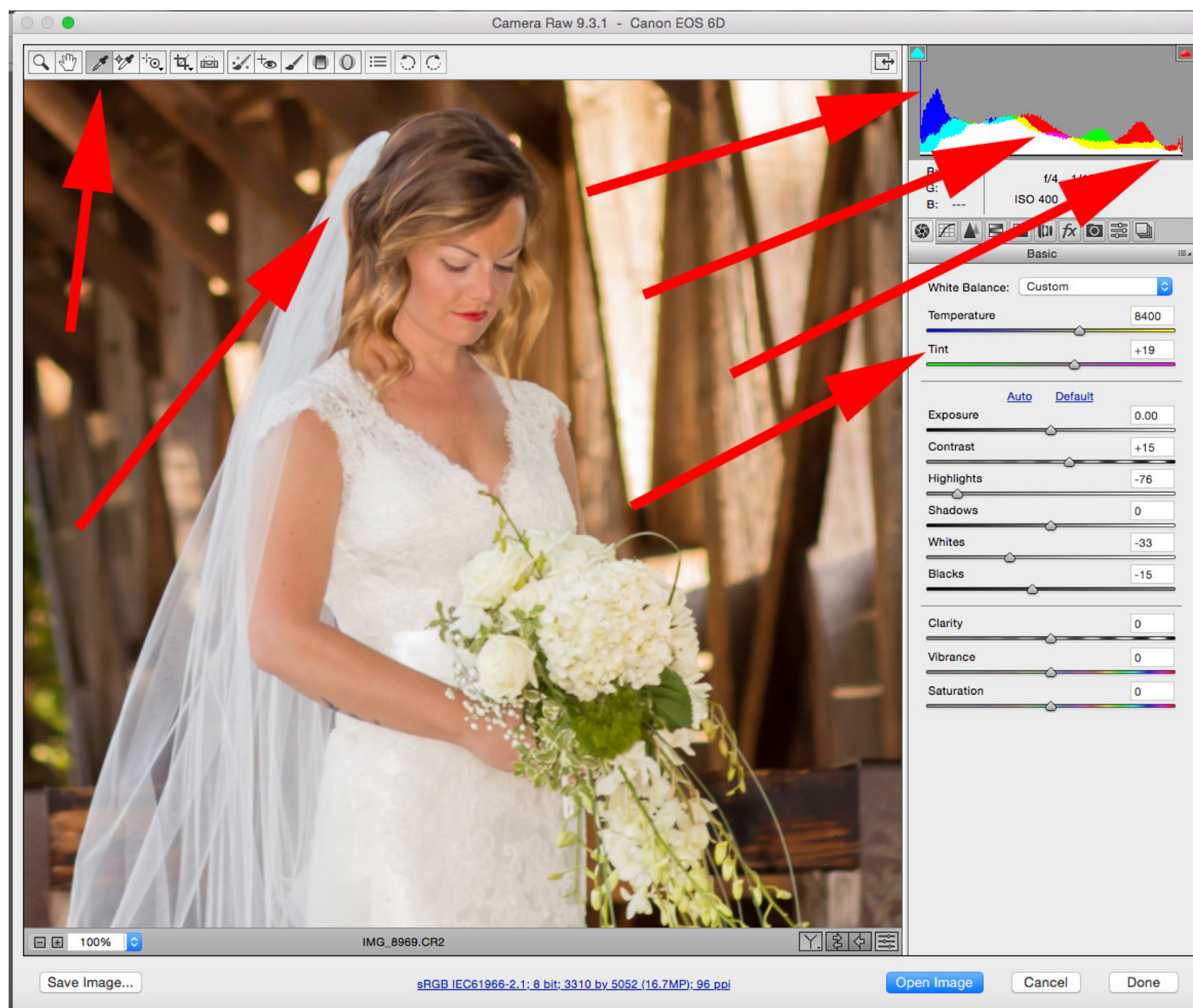


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 028

pretty helpful.)

In Reference 027, I clicked on the dress with the White Balance tool, just above the arm, where the arrow is pointing. This action really warmed up the image. Look at the histogram. The “Blue” areas were significantly reduced; however, the “Red” areas were significantly increased. I’m now switching to my eyes for evaluation and thinking, “This is too red.” I reset my last action.

In Reference 028, the second arrow from the left indicates where I left-clicked my mouse with the White Balance tool. Checking our histogram, we can see that the blue has been reduced and the red has slightly increased, but not as significantly as when we clicked on the dress. Going to my final check—my eyes—I feel that the image is still too yellow/red. I reset my last action.

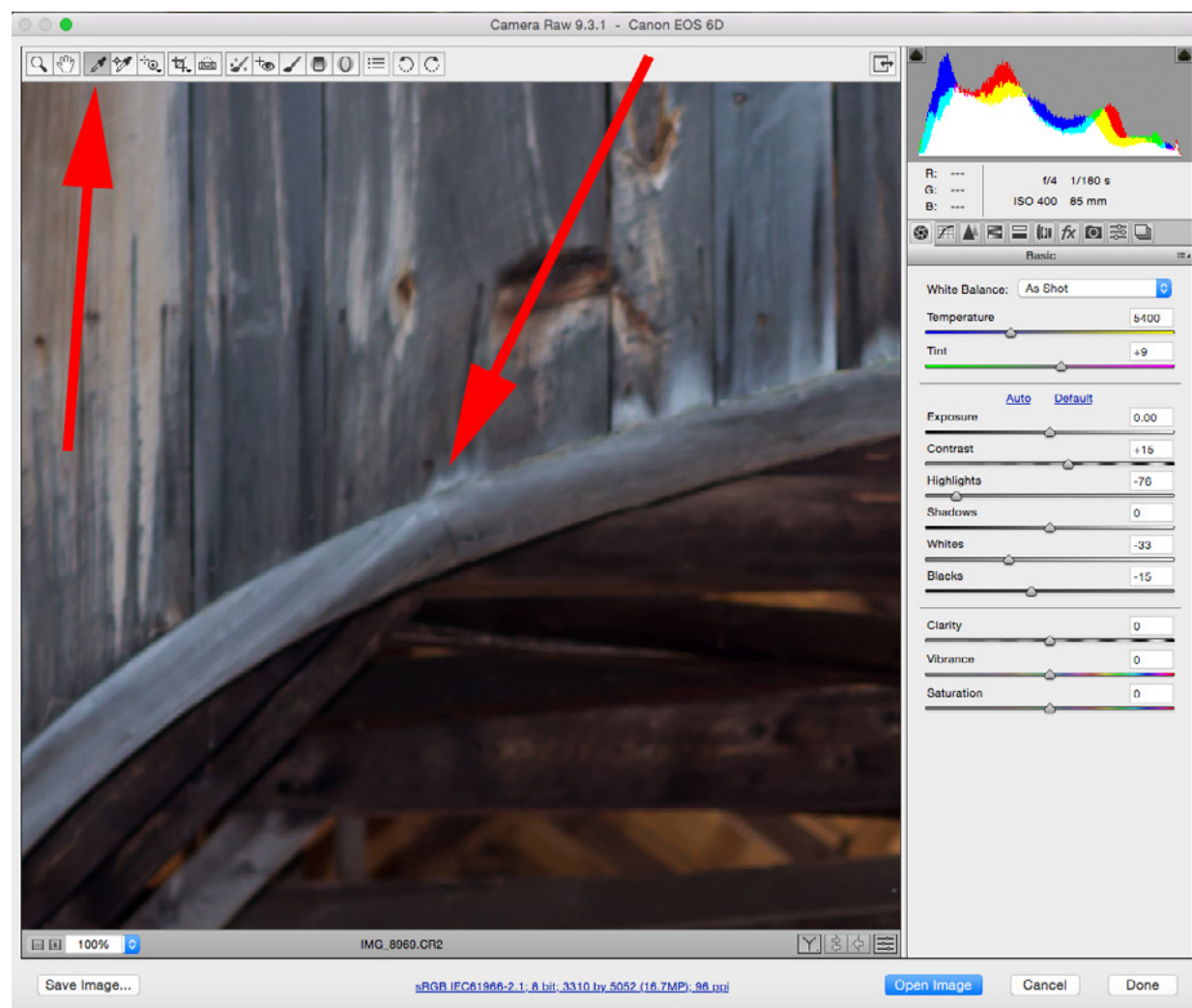


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 029

I identified an area within the image that I believe was close to an 18% gray tone. The downward pointing arrow is where I took my sample. Let's see the result.

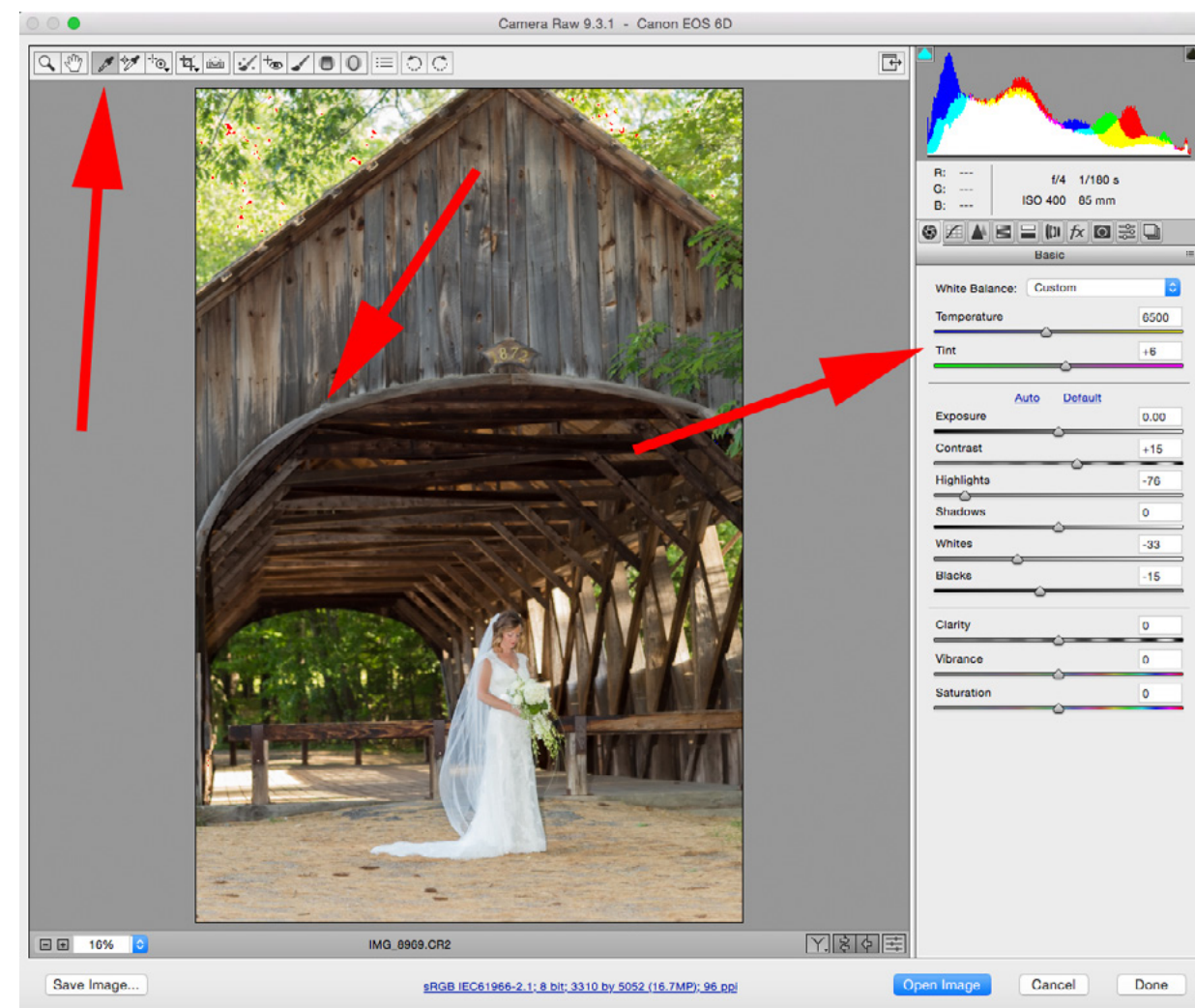


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 030

In Reference 030, you can see the result of clicking on the gray area of the barn. Our histogram shows reduced levels of blue, especially in the mid-tones and highlights. The yellow/red has increased slightly. To my eyes, the blue has been removed and the image has been warmed up just enough to give an accurate, pleasant rendition of the lighting that occurred that afternoon.

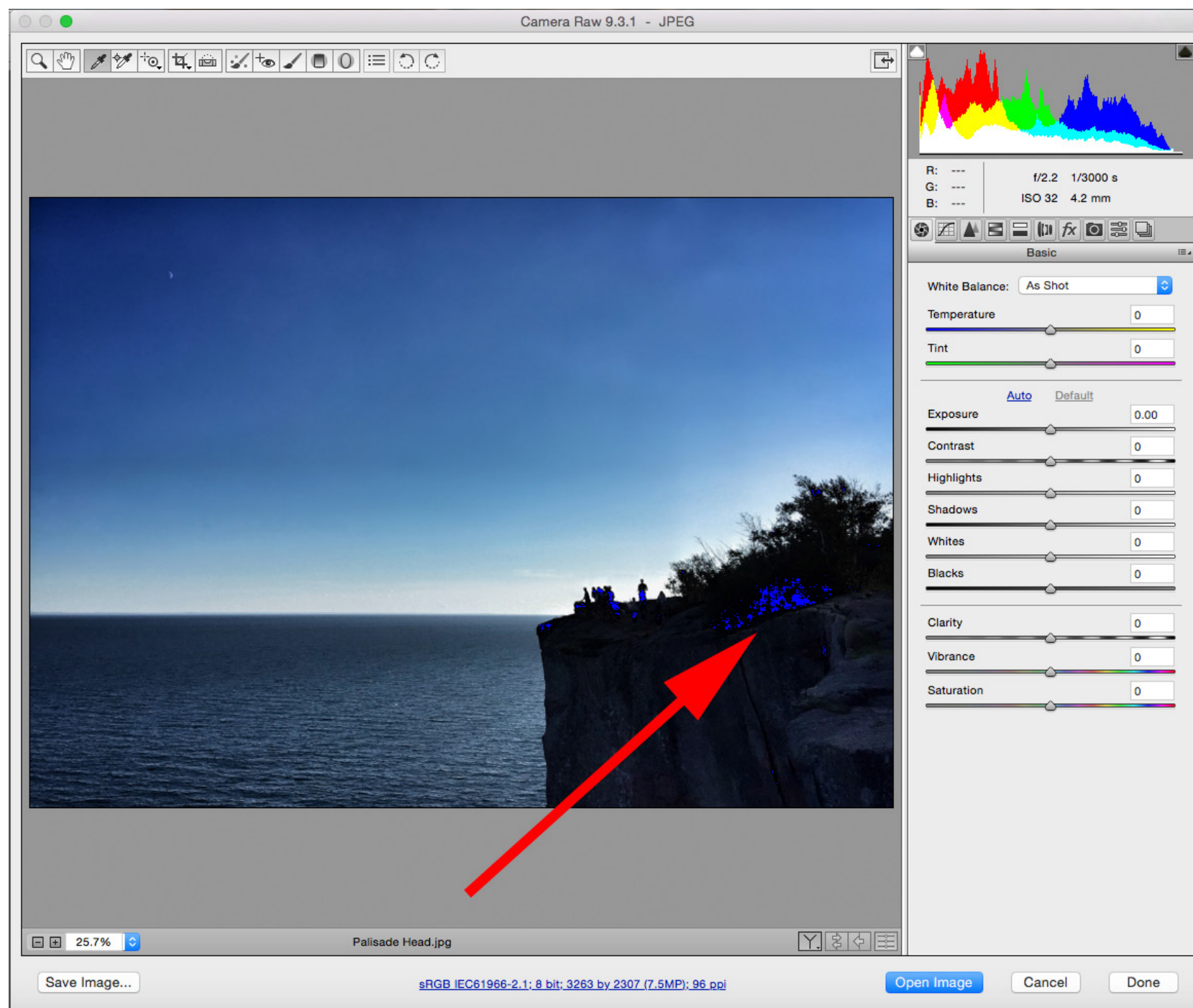


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 031

I want you to review References 027, 028 and 030. I want you to look specifically at the Temperature and Tint settings.

Did you notice that the Temperature setting in References 027 and 028 was much higher than in 030? The Tint was also much higher. The important aspect to learn from this is to use patience and thought as to where you are going to select your color balance setting from. 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, and a thought process toward your end result.

⚠ Important: Please be sure to read the Elements section of this guide as I included some new information that would be helpful to the Photoshop user as well.

Many beginning photographers want simple answers. Unfortunately, that's not how it works. It's not like engineering, where if bolt "A" isn't properly tightened into thread "B," the bridge is going to fall down. Photography is an art. Art means

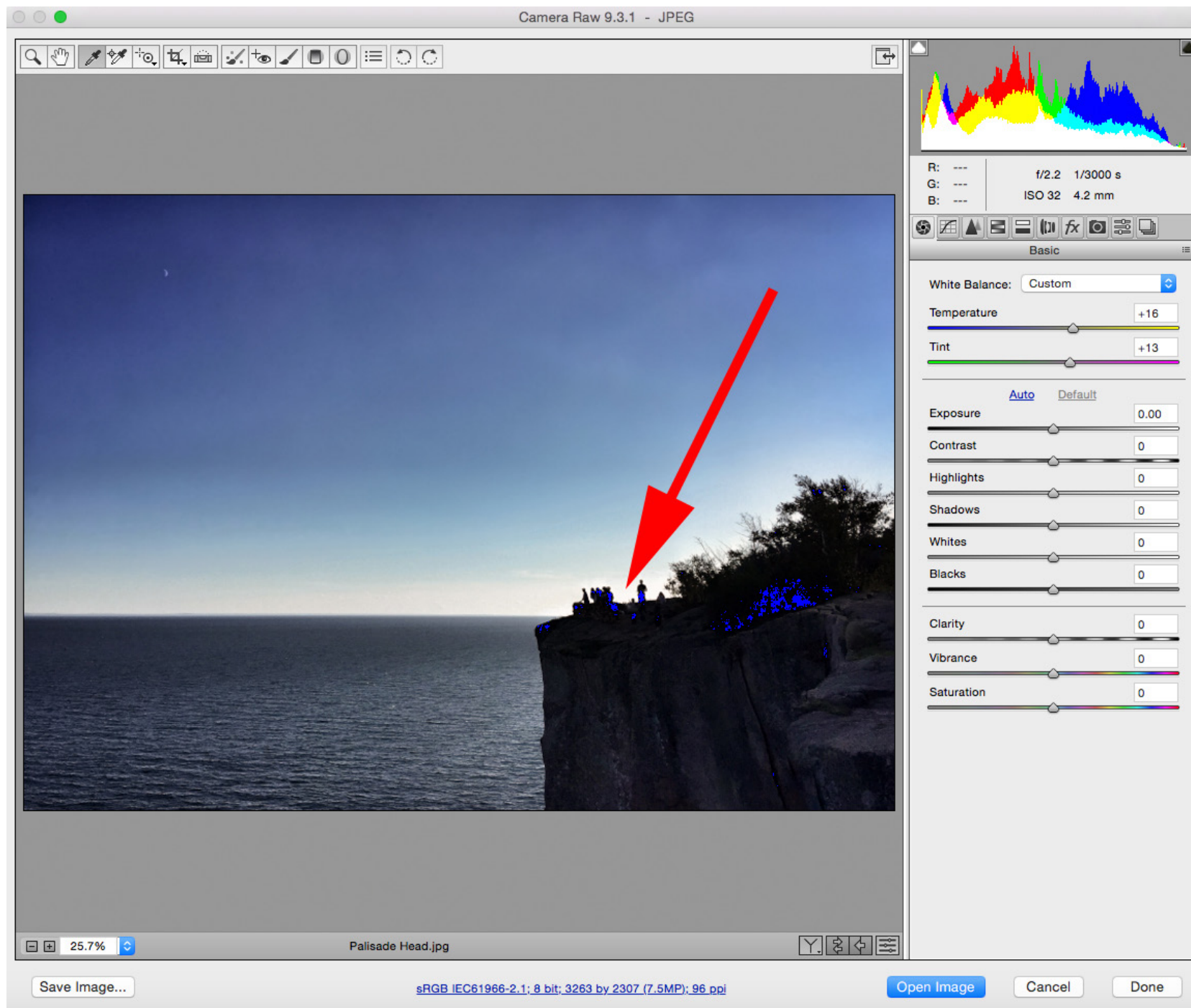


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 032

you must think through your message.

Take Reference 031, for example. The color temperature is way off normal and there is a lot of clipping in the shadows. The Fundamental Edits List dictates that we should fix this.

But, what happens if we do?

The red arrow indicates where I left clicked with the Color Balance tool. What happened? The entire mood of the photograph became washed out in the color.

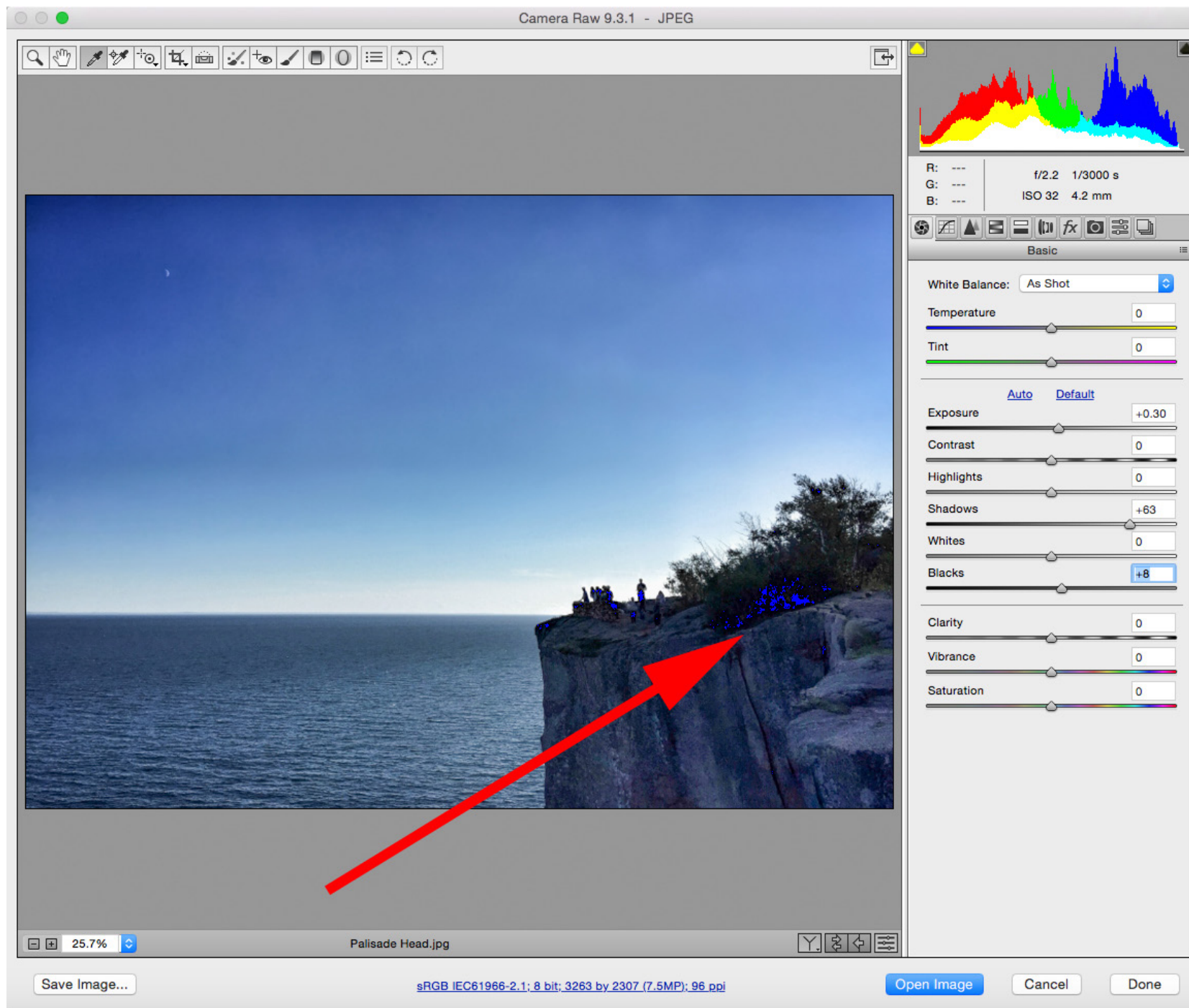


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 033

In Reference 033, when I attempted to remove the black clipping, the mood/impact of the photograph was even further removed.

Key Lesson: It is important to learn how to use the tools of the Fundamental Edits List effectively. However, nothing replaces your mind. Don't follow formulas. Use a mixture of knowledge, numbers, and creativity to achieve the 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 file being opened.
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: In my camera, I set the color temperature.
8. True or False: When using the Color Balance tool, I should always click on something white in my picture.
9. True or False: When adjusting the Temperature slider, I should ALWAYS 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 useful tool, which I believe often gets overlooked. Many photographers aren't even sure exactly what it does.

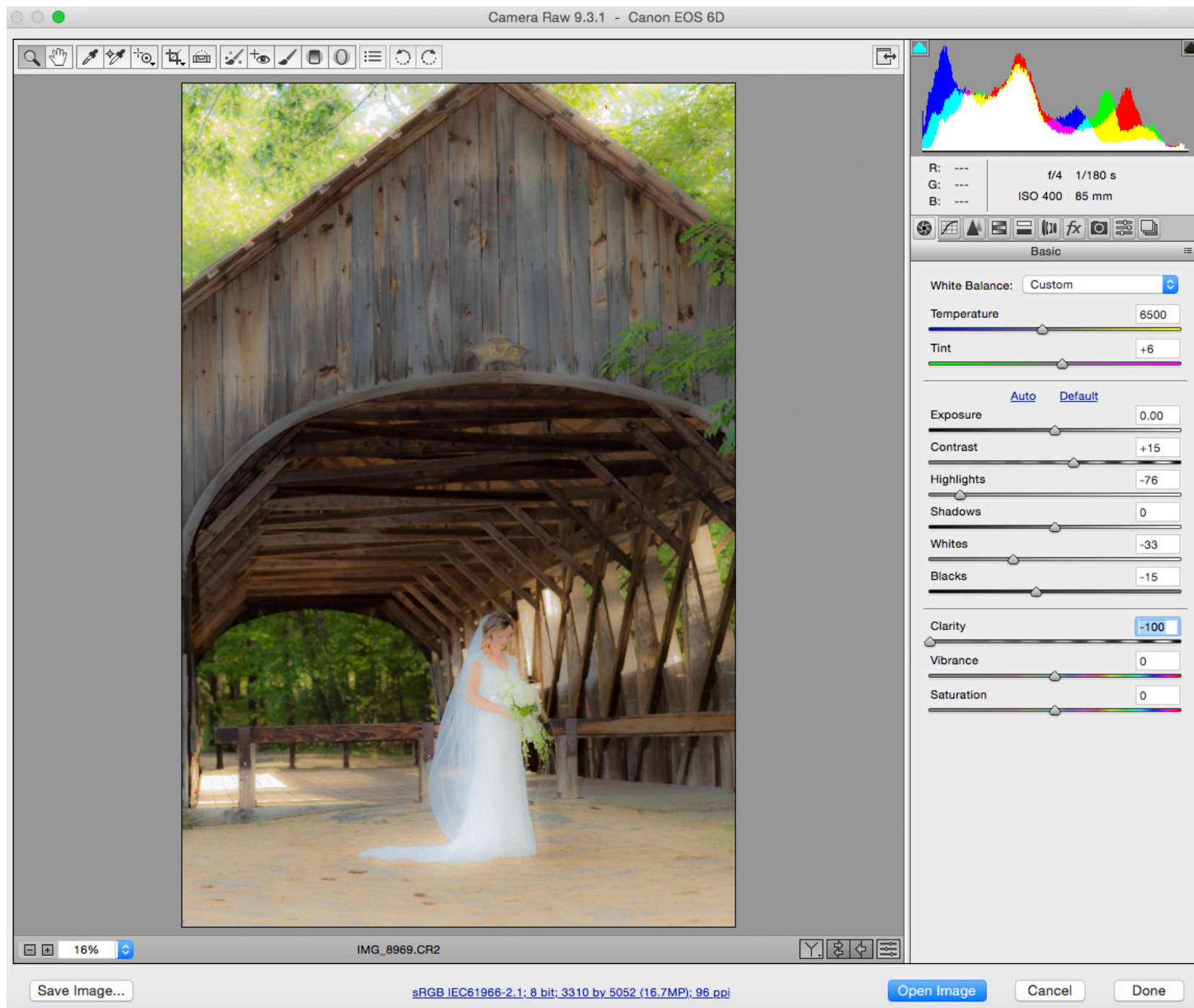
Technically, this is what it does: it adds contrast to the mid-range tones.

Creatively, this is what it does: it creates visual impact by adding the visual 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 be adjusting it before even thinking about touching the Sharpening tool.

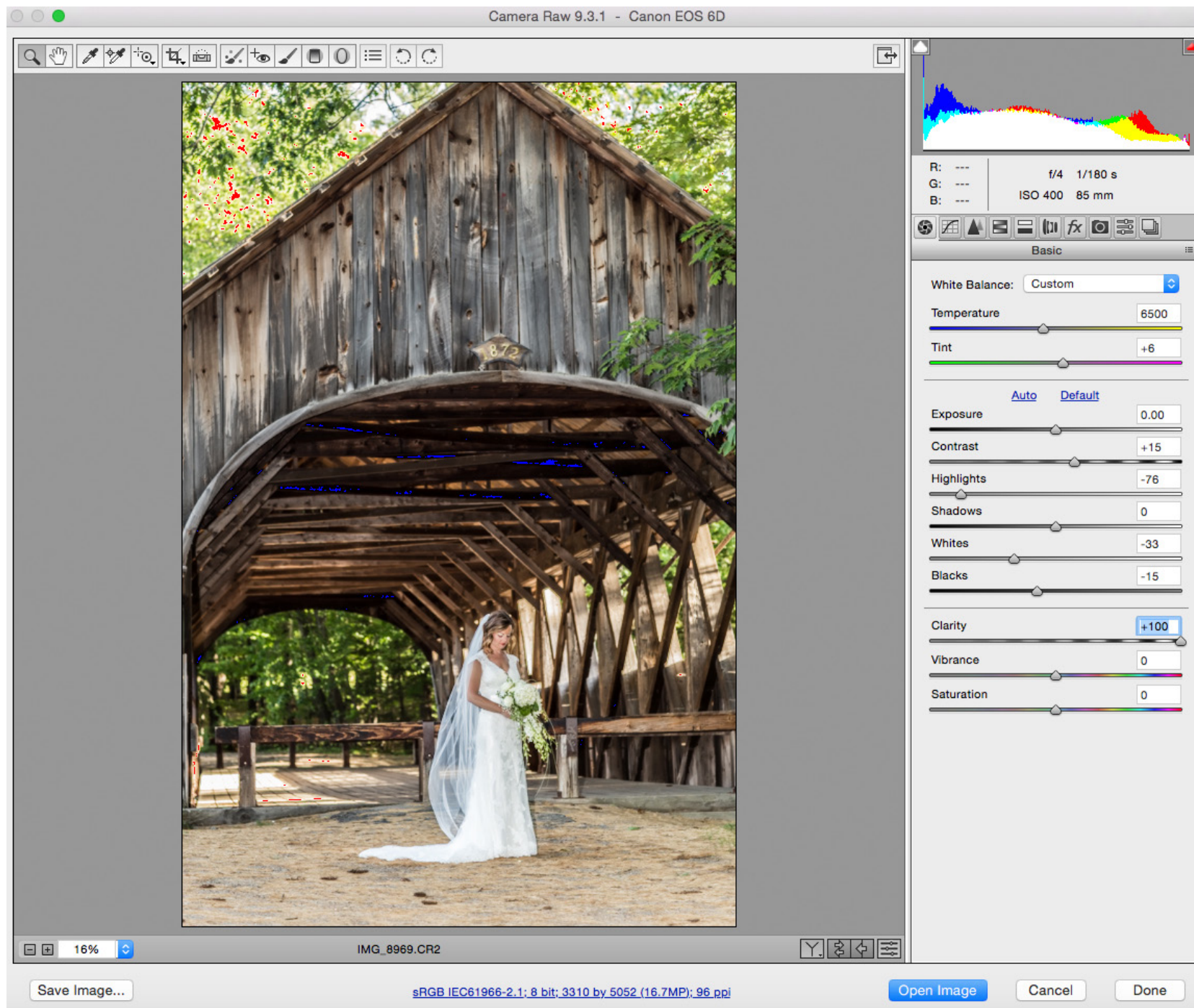
There is no magic number with the Clarity setting. Its effect will vary widely depending on the image. I will tell you this: in all of the years since it has been introduced, I have never used a setting great than +40. You can also reduce Clarity by moving the slider in the negative direction. The only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

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



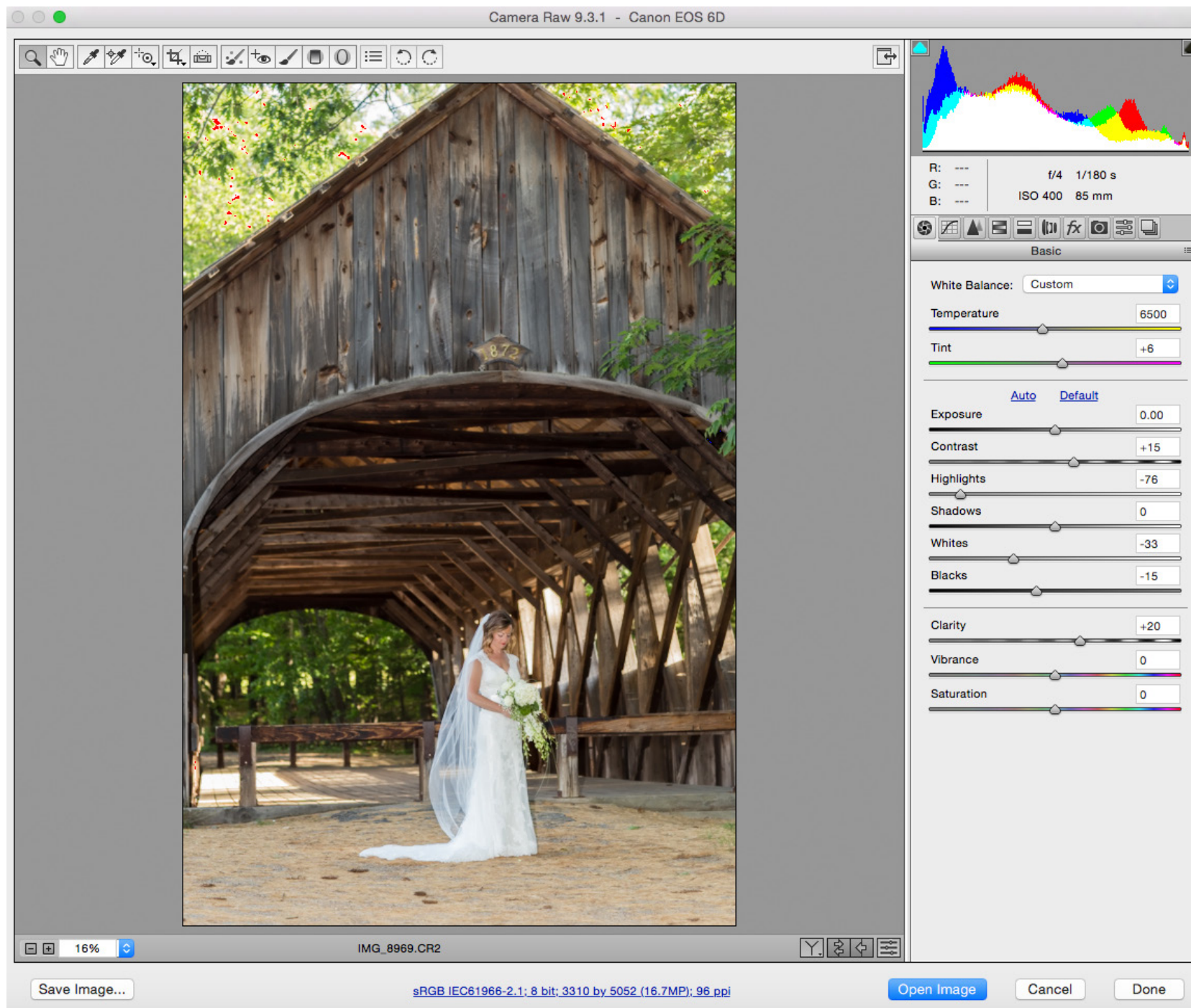
To give you a visual impression of what the Clarity slider will do to an image, I have set it to -100.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 034



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

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 035



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. Like I said, "There is no magic number, or scale, with which to determine the Clarity setting. It's a combination of experience, and your eye." I will tell you this: I determine the Clarity adjustment first- while looking at the image full frame. Then, I zoom in to 100% on the main subject and visually check the area out thoroughly for anything that doesn't look right.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 036

Steps Ten and Eleven – Vibrancy and 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 keep from over-saturating their images. When you push the Saturation levels of a color too high, it begins to clip. In this definition, clipping is similar to what we talked about 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, and you will also see 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 (that had 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 that already have a fair amount of color saturation in them. 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 Edits List requires me to work with these two adjustments together and in tandem.

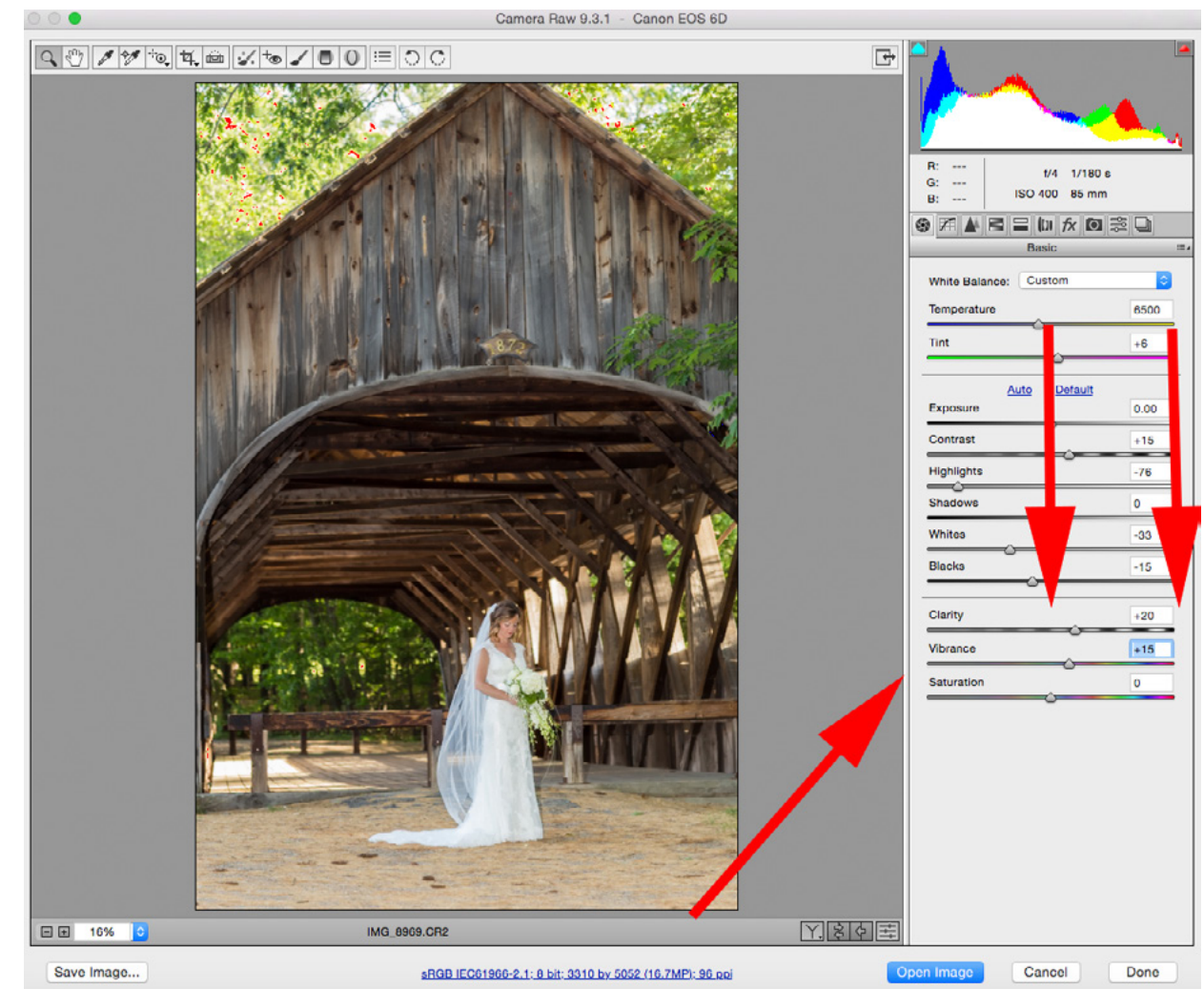


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 037

I always begin with the Vibrance setting, and I'm looking at the image full-frame. Take notice of the two arrows pointing downward in Reference 037. They indicate the position of the slider between the settings 0 and +100.

I almost never move the Vibrance slider toward the negative side. The only reason that I can think of to do that would be for some kind of special effect.

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

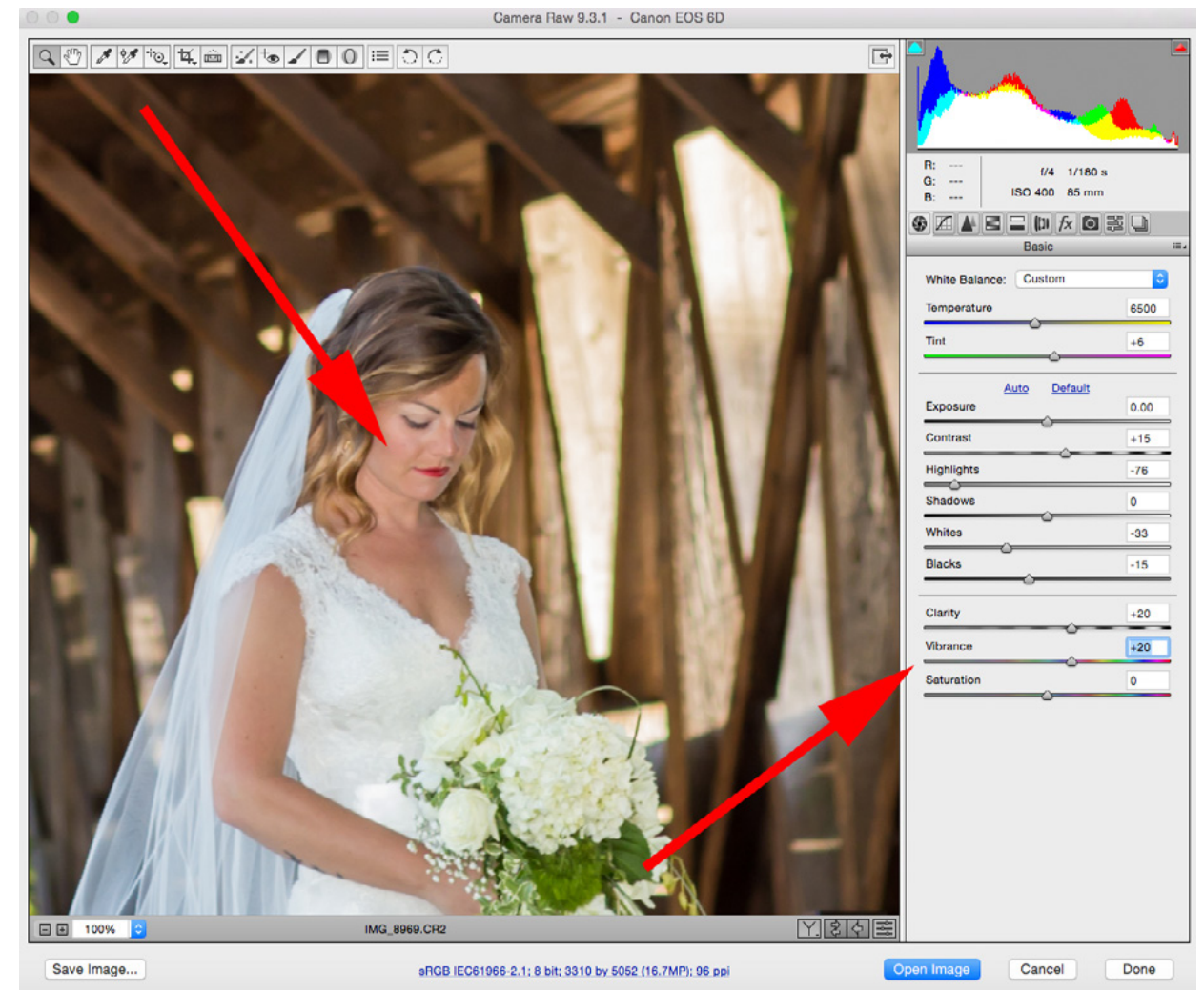



Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 038

I then zoomed in to the image to 100%. I want to check 'visually' 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 those ruby red lips. At 100%, her skin tone still looked a little flat, so I tweaked up the Vibrance 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 Vibrance affects mid-tone color brightness levels that typically do not have a lot of color saturation (color purity) to begin with.

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

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

 **Key Lesson:** When making adjustments to the sliders in the Camera Raw Processing Window, it can be frustrating if you're trying to make a critical adjustment and you're just sliding it manually. Here is how you can accomplish that...

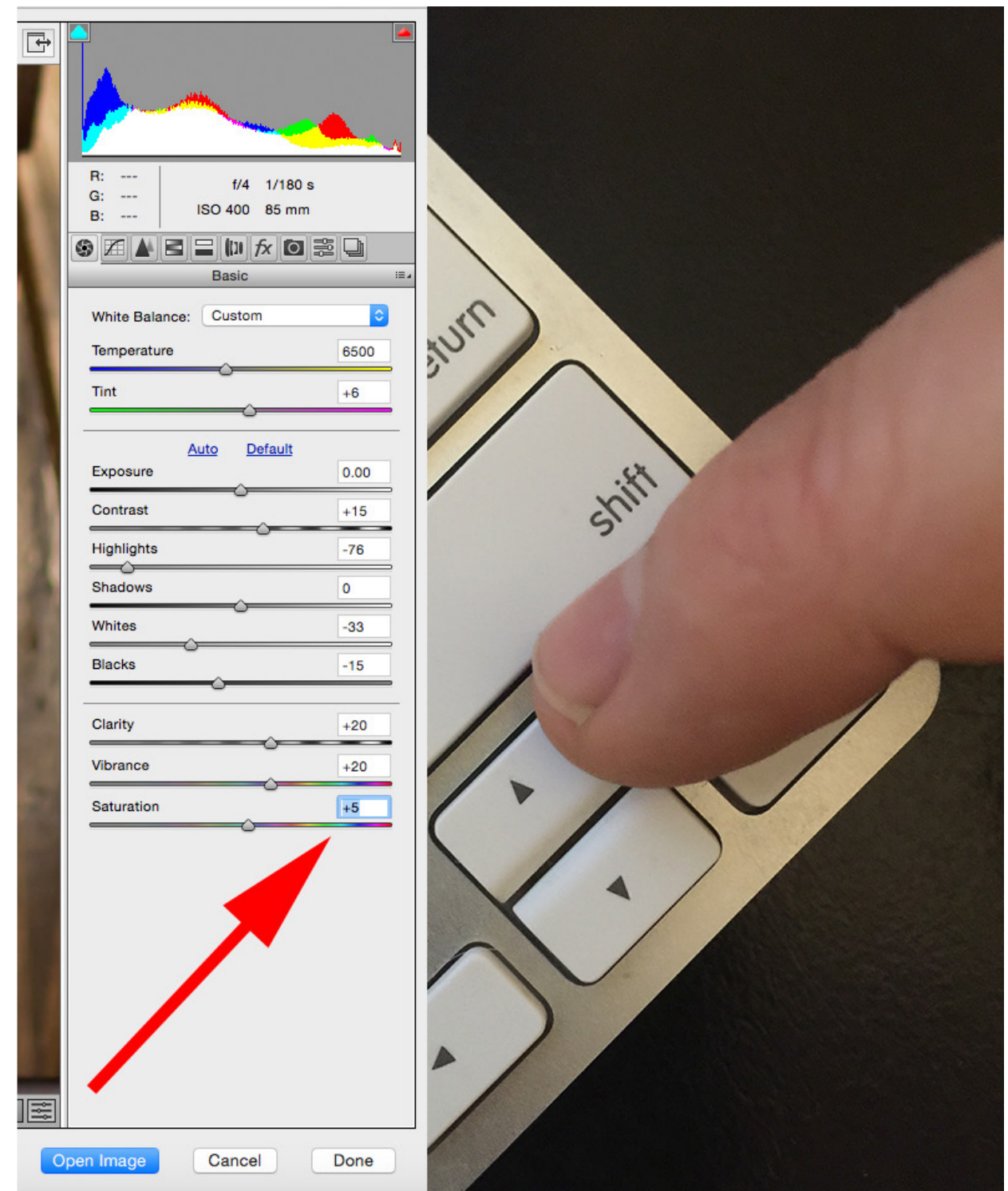


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 039

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 the “Up and Down” keys on my keyboard 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 really observe the radical change in the color of her lips, as well as the significant changes in the histogram with each step.

Back to the Saturation Adjustment

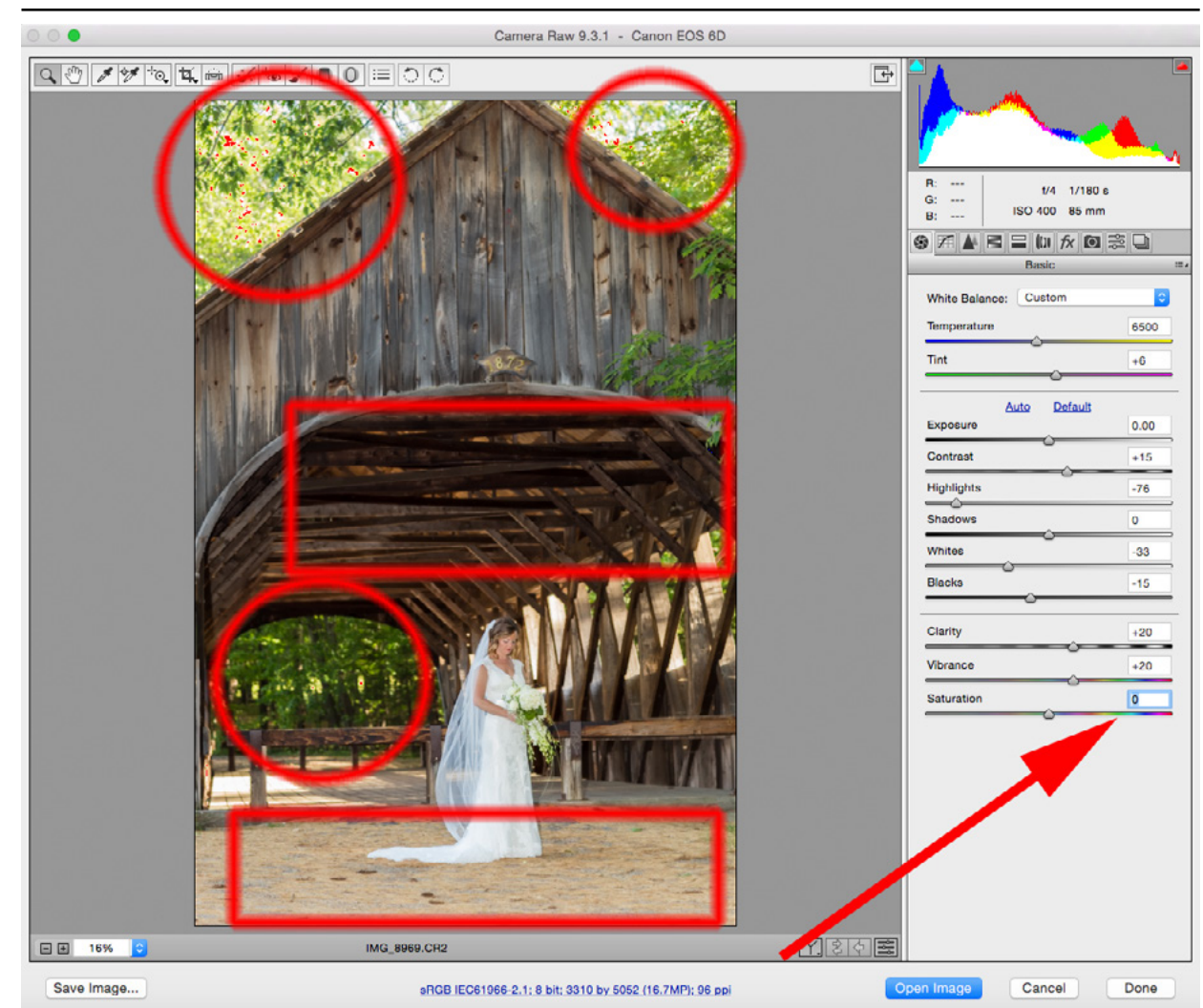
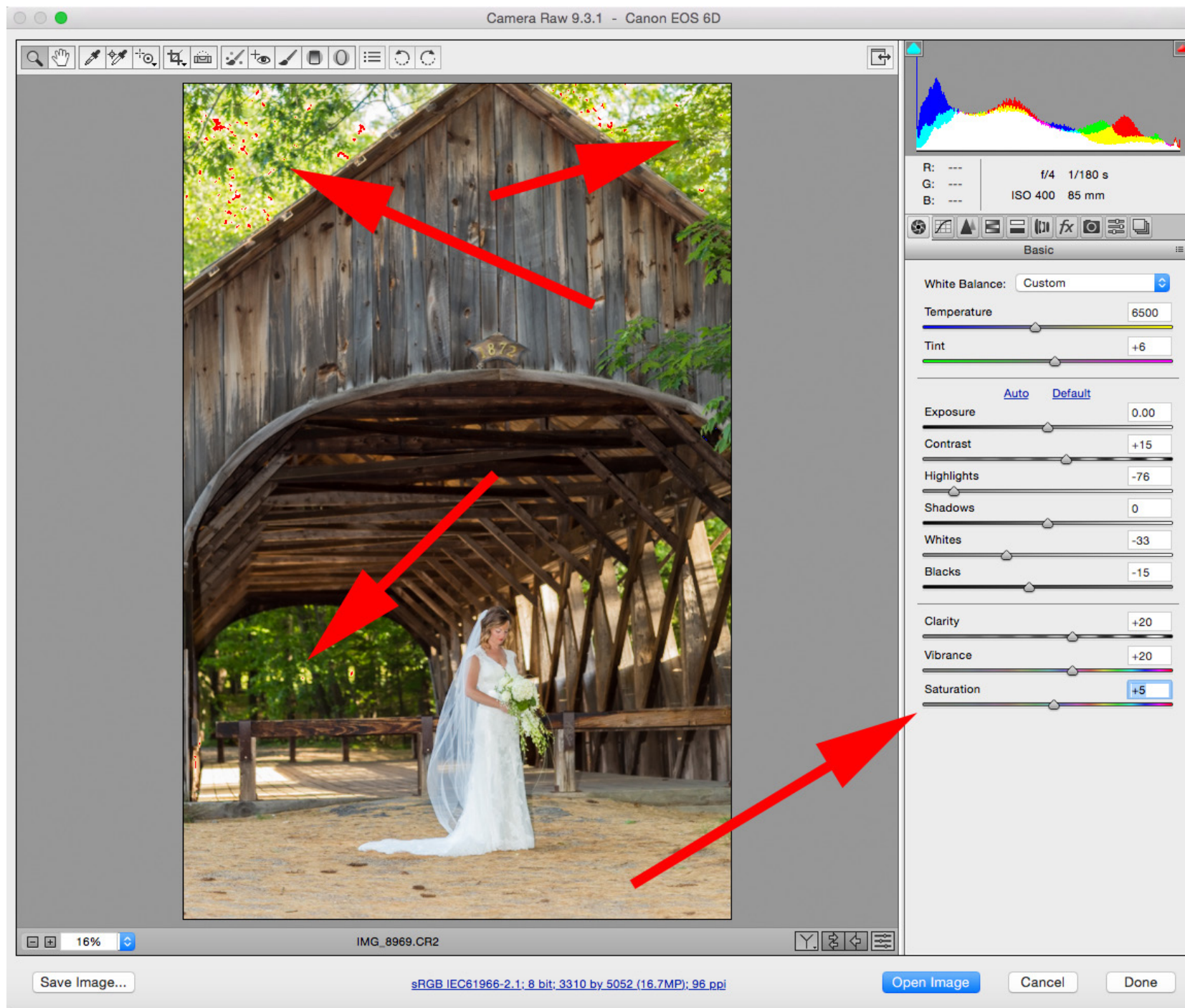
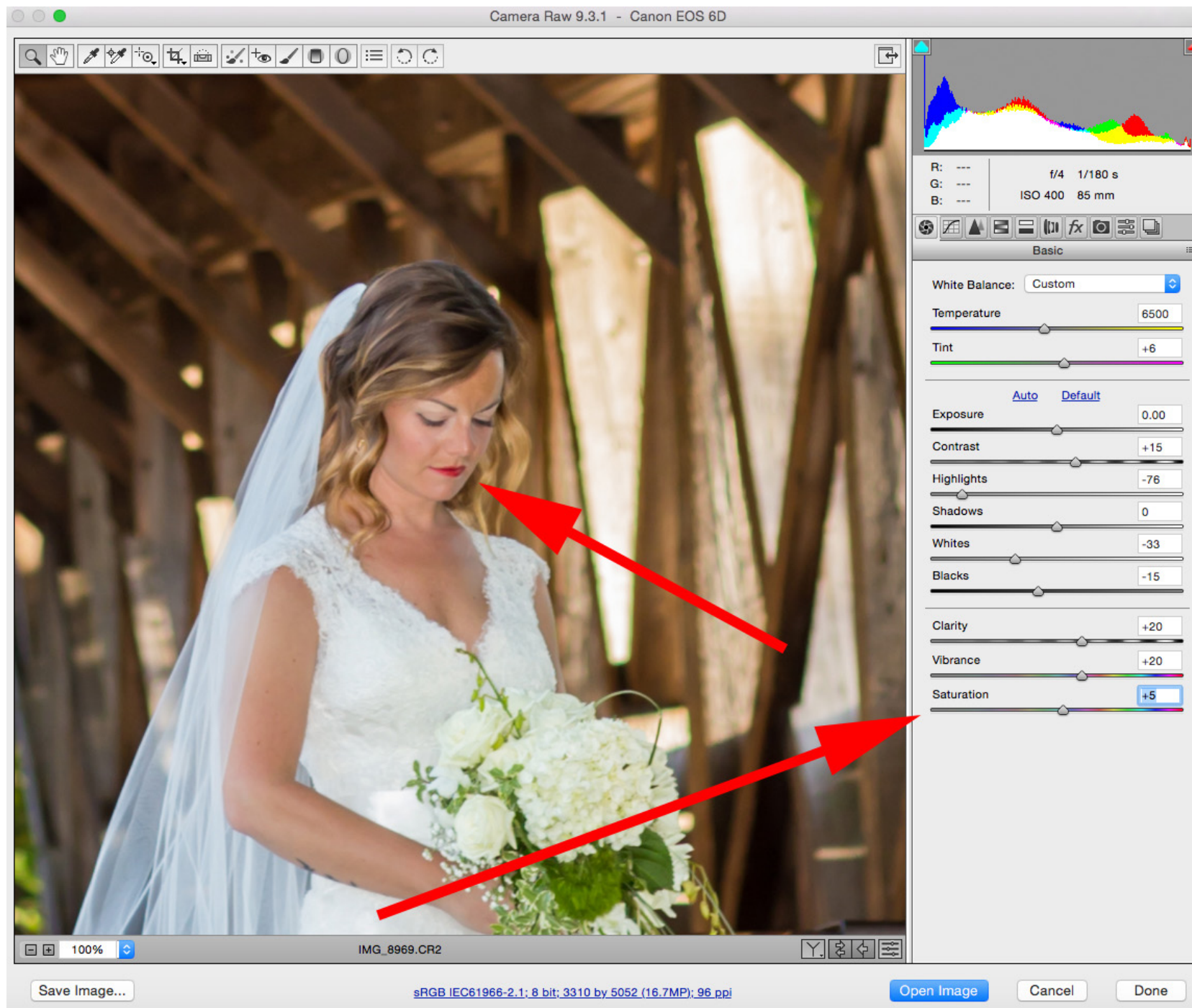


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 040



View the image full-frame and identify those areas that you wish to affect with the Saturation slider as well as those areas that you do not want to affect. In Reference 040, the circles represent areas that I would like to increase the saturation. The boxes indicate areas that I do not wish to radically change the saturation—obviously that also includes her skin tone and ruby red lips.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 041



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 is telling us that the saturation levels are changing rapidly, even if our eyes can't detect it.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 042

The final step of a Saturation adjustment is to zoom in to a preview of 100% and examine important details. In our bridal portrait, her skin tone and her lips are a major concern. She wore ruby red lipstick, so she wants 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 check tells me that her lips look "just right"!

Step Twelve – Efix: Vignette

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

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

A vignette is a very useful tool for improving a composition.

It's a funny thing about the use of 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 that you apply any change to your original file (photograph) that the effect itself becomes so dominant that it overtakes the photograph, 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 Edits 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 they 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?

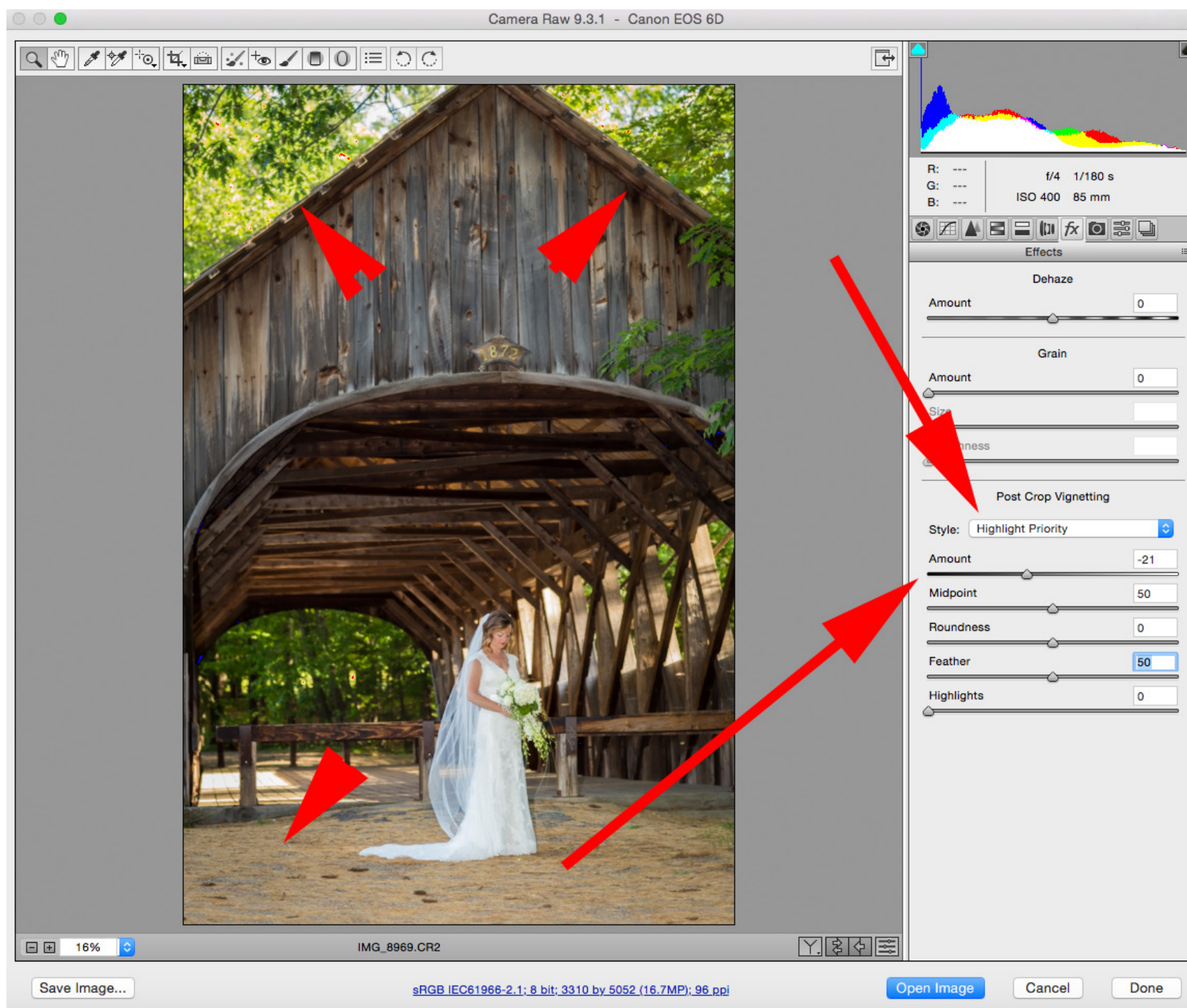
The human eye gravitates towards contrast. It will generally (not always) gravitate toward a lighter area over a darker area. This was how the vignette was originally discovered. Painters would use it to force their viewer's eyes inward toward the subject. As photographers, we can use it the same way.

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

We find the vignette option under the “fx” tab. The section we are looking for is called “Post Crop Vignetting.” Don’t let the wording throw you off. It doesn’t matter if you have cropped your image or not. The term simply means that the vignette is going to be applied to the visible image area. Let’s say in doing your Fundamental Edits List, you originally cropped an image and applied a vignette. Later, you come back 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.

Let’s look at the tools in the “Post Crop Vignetting” workspace.

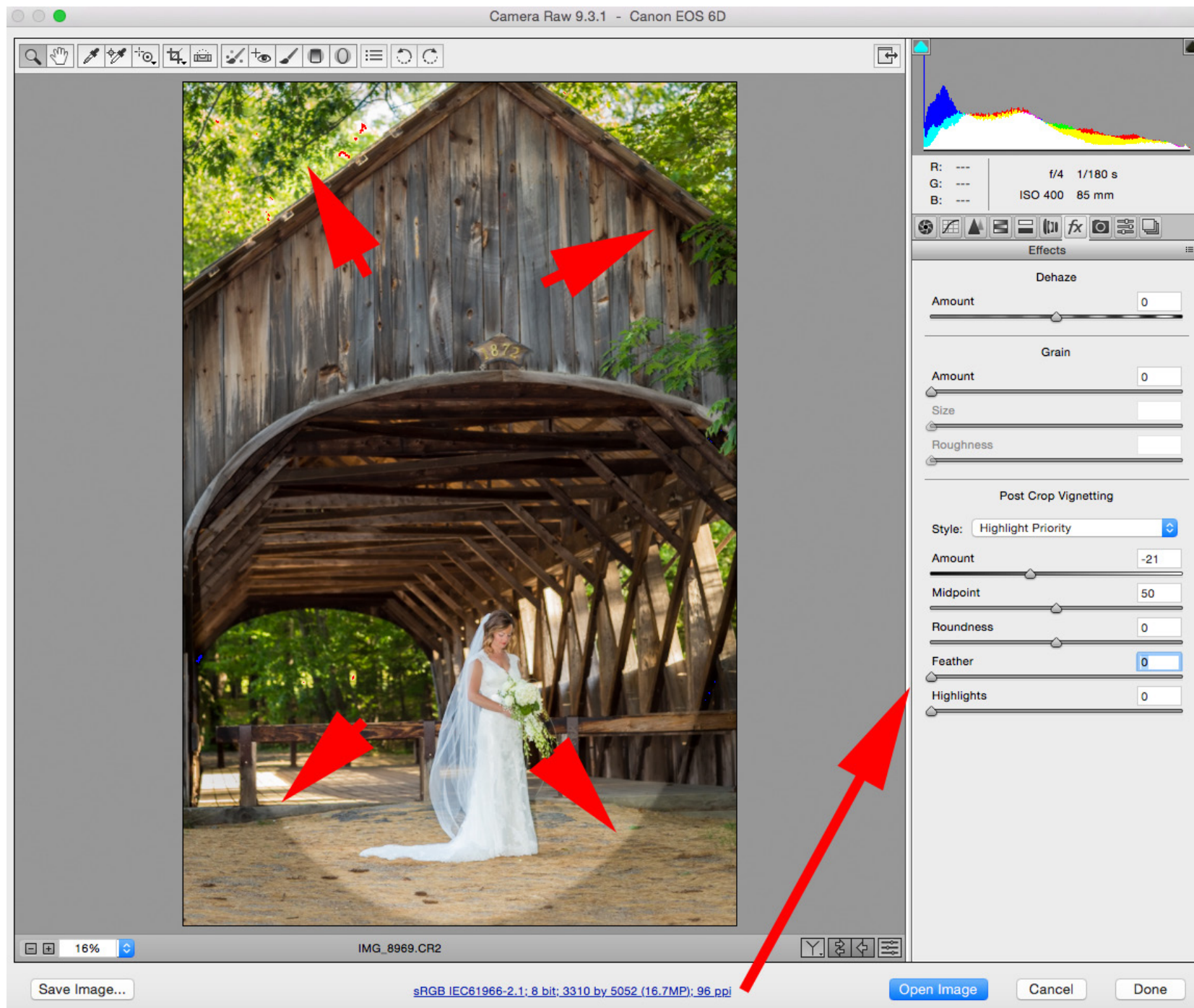
1. Amount – The default setting is 0. Moving the slider to the right creates an area that is lighter in tone than the middle. Sometimes this is effective. I rarely use it. Moving the slider to the left creates an area that is darker than the middle.
2. Midpoint – The software measures the size of the vignette by examining the central point of the image outward. The Midpoint setting determines how big the vignette is going to be from the edges of the frame inward.
3. Roundness – The default setting for the vignette is an oval shape. Moving the slider to the right changes the shape to a circle. Moving the slider to the left changes the shape to a rectangle with rounded corners.
4. 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 creates a longer and smoother transition.
5. Highlights – This slider is only active if you’re creating a dark vignette. Oftentimes, highlight areas within the vignette will take on a muddy gray look. By moving this slider to the right, you can restore the highlight areas back to their original brightness value without affecting the other tones located within the vignette.



Let's apply a vignette to our bridal portrait.

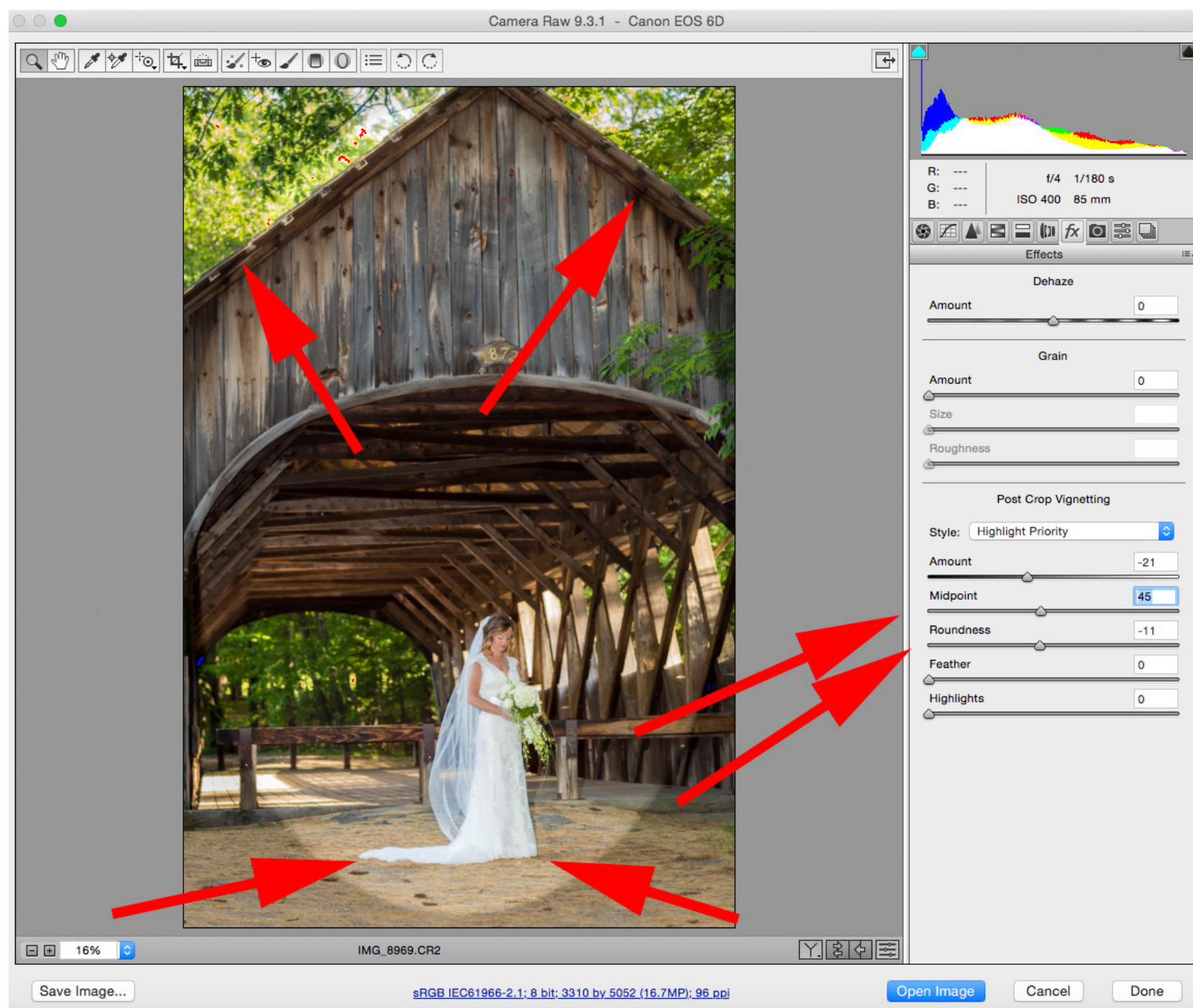
Look at Reference 43. Reduce the Amount setting until you begin to see the vignette effect. Try and set it close to what you want it to look like in the end product.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 043



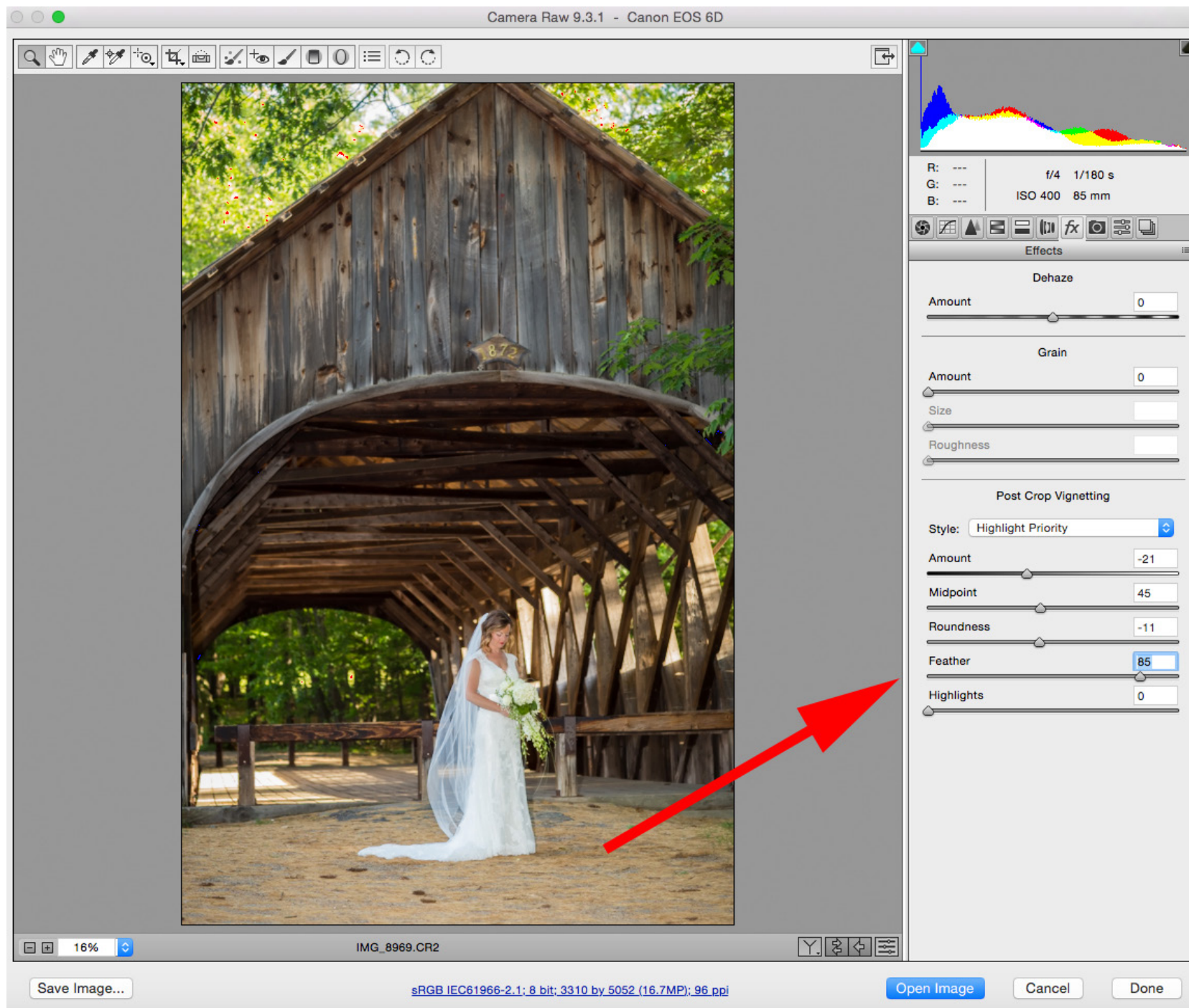
See Reference 044. Reduce the Feather slider to 0 and this will give you a clear picture of where the vignette is located. It will also give you a better idea of how much you have reduced the brightness levels of the outside of the frame created by the vignette versus the inside.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 044



Adjust the Midpoint and Roundness to your satisfaction. For our bridal portrait, I chose -11 for the Roundness setting, and 45 for the Midpoint setting. This is illustrated in Reference 045. I wanted the vignette to approach the bride's feet and dress without encroaching into them. Up at the top, I wanted the vignette to just touch the bridge without altering the majority of it.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 045



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 046, you'll see that I chose a setting of 85 for the bridal portrait.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 046

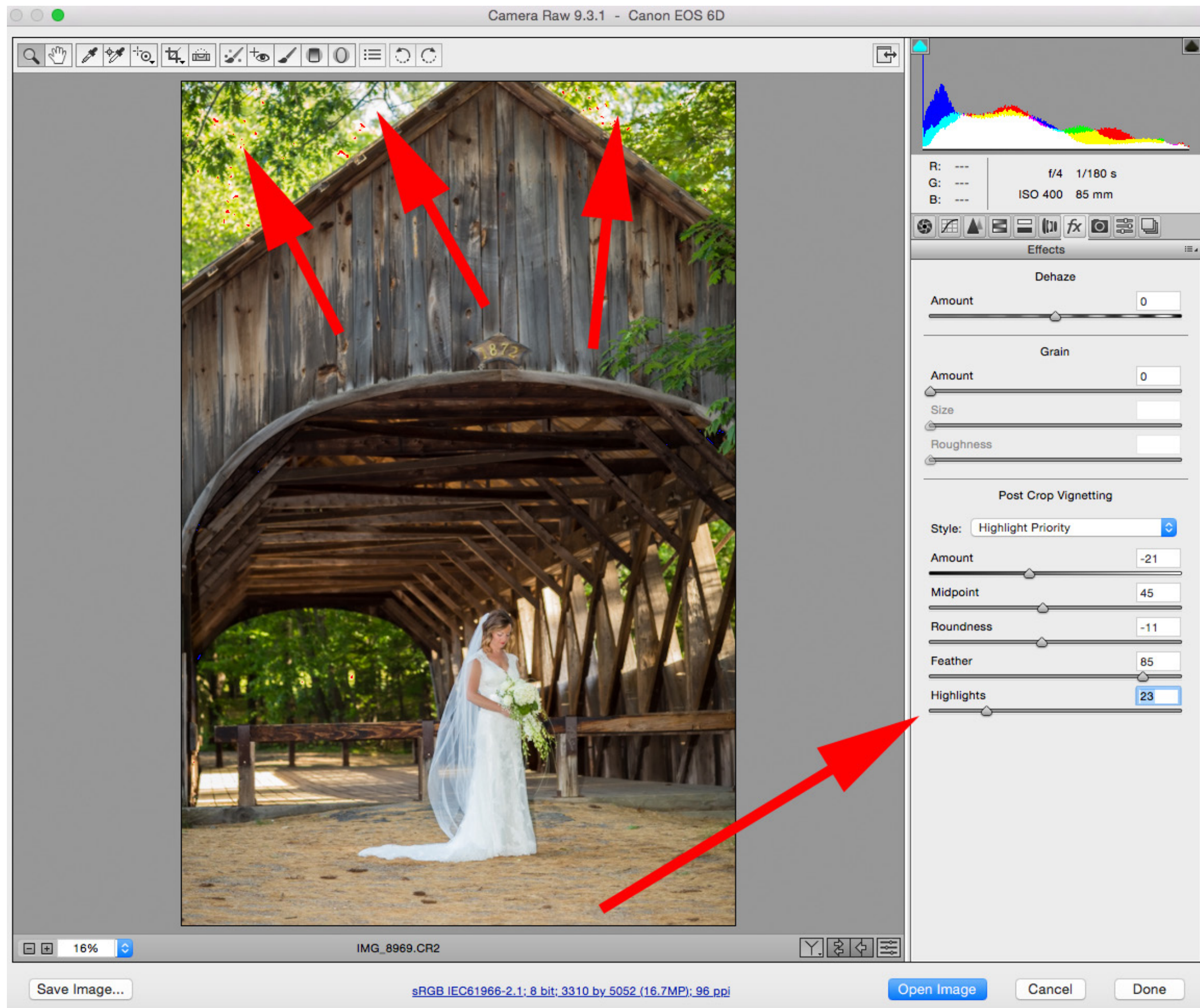


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 047

The upper arrows in Reference 047 point to highlight areas within the vignette that took on a gray, milky look. By raising the Highlights slider to 23, 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. Oftentimes, 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!

Step Thirteen – Efex: Dehaze

The Dehaze tool is also relatively new to Photoshop.

Essentially, what it does is add contrast and saturation to an image that is low in contrast and saturation. Adobe's early comments on the Dehaze tool were that it was useful in removing the "distance haze" that is often found in landscape photography. Supposedly, it has an algorithm that analyzes the file and then puts 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 Edits List. For certain purposes it works really well, and it's not available within Photoshop. So it's on my Fundamental Edits 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 for whatever reason.

I'm going to give you a quick look at what it does.

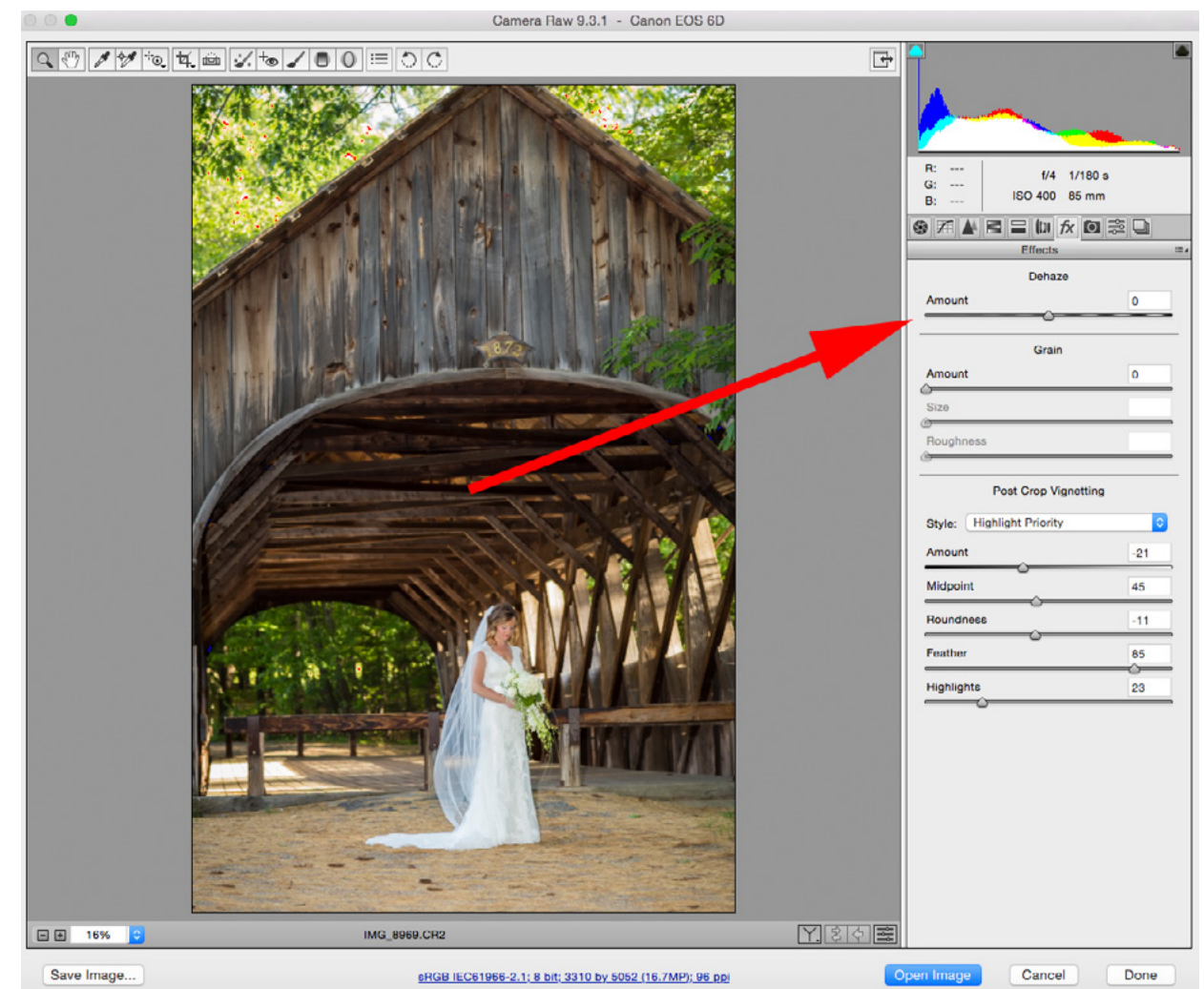


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 048

The Dehaze slider is located under the “fx” tab. It defaults to 0 (Reference 048).

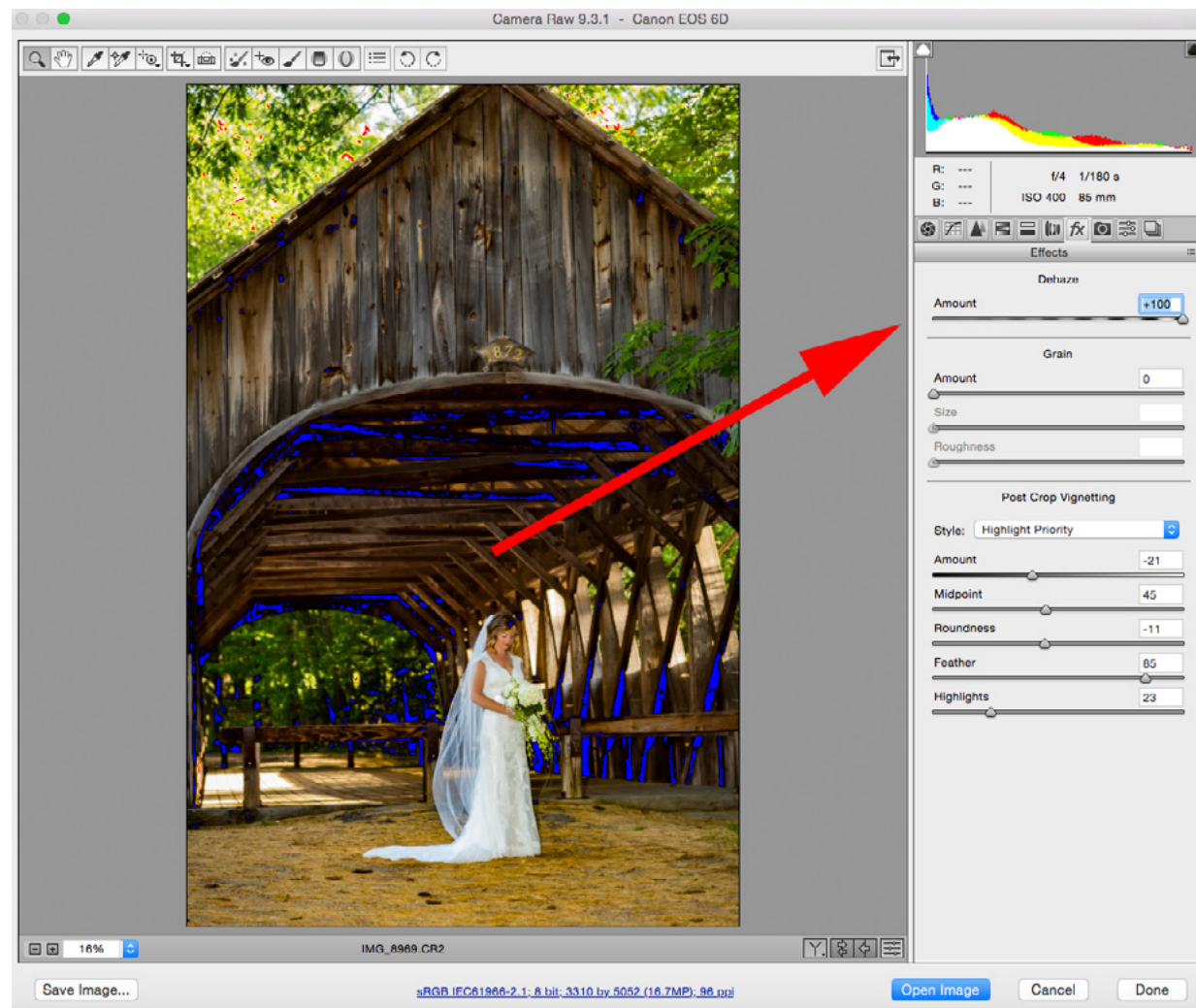


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 049

In Reference 049, I have moved the Dehaze slider all the way to the right; I set it at +100. You can see 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 put in some function to control where the effect would be applied. If you have haze in the distance of your landscape photograph, but not in the foreground, you don't want it applied to the foreground. Still, sometimes this tool provides the magic fairy dust that an image needs!

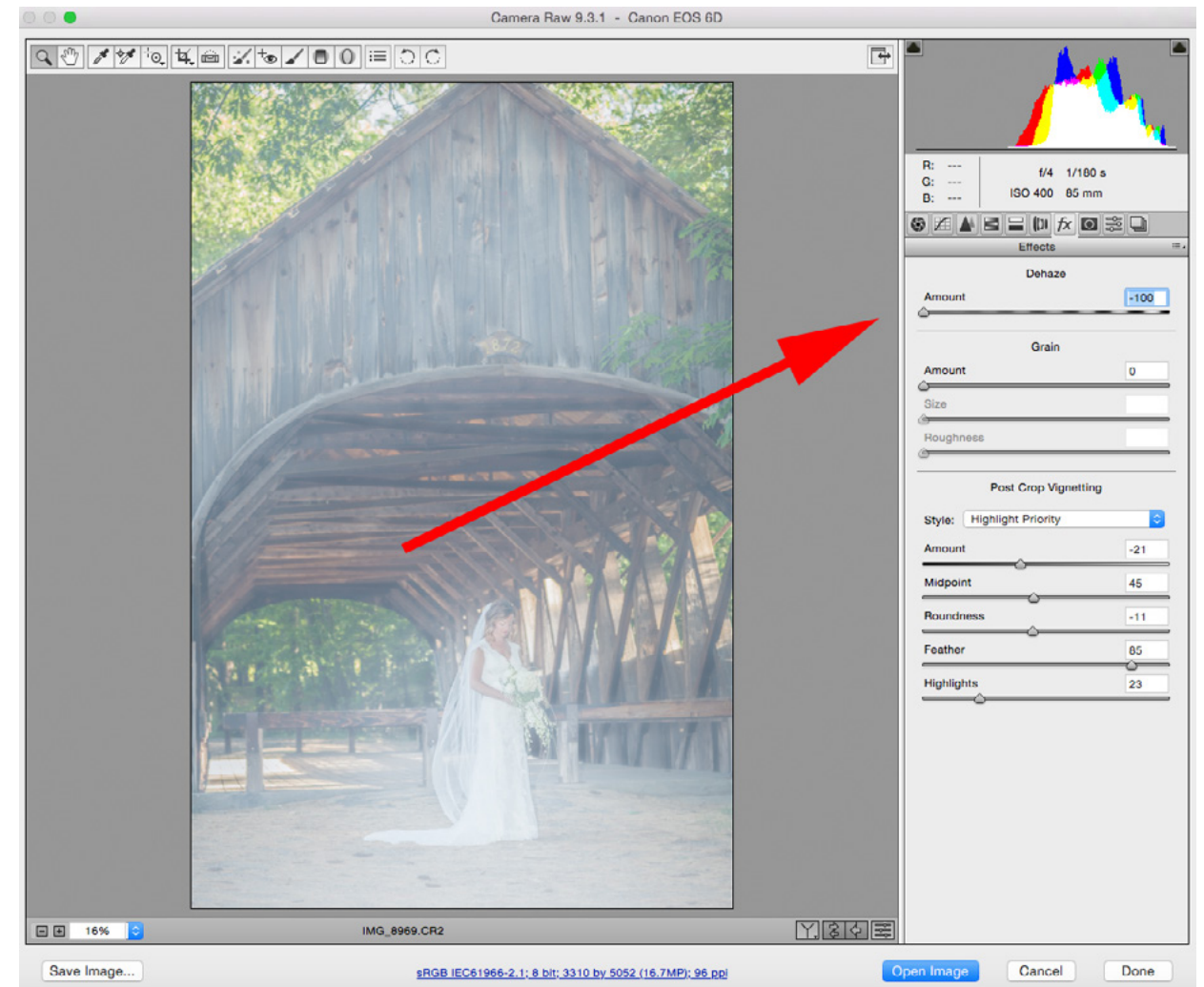


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 050

In Reference 050, you see the result of moving the Dehaze slider all of the way to the left (-100). It removes most of the contrast and saturation. I can't think of a real good reason to ever do this unless you were attempting to create a special effect.

Step Fourteen – Localized Adjustments with the Adjustment Brush

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

You really want to learn how to use this tool!

As I have covered it rather extensively already, I'm not going to do that here in this guide. In this guide, I'm just going to show you what I did to this bridal portrait.

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 Adjustment Brush for Added Impact in Your Photos](#)

There are numerous adjustments that can be made using the Adjustment Brush.

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

There are four main objectives that I like to use the Adjustment Brush for.

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

Let's work on our bridal portrait.

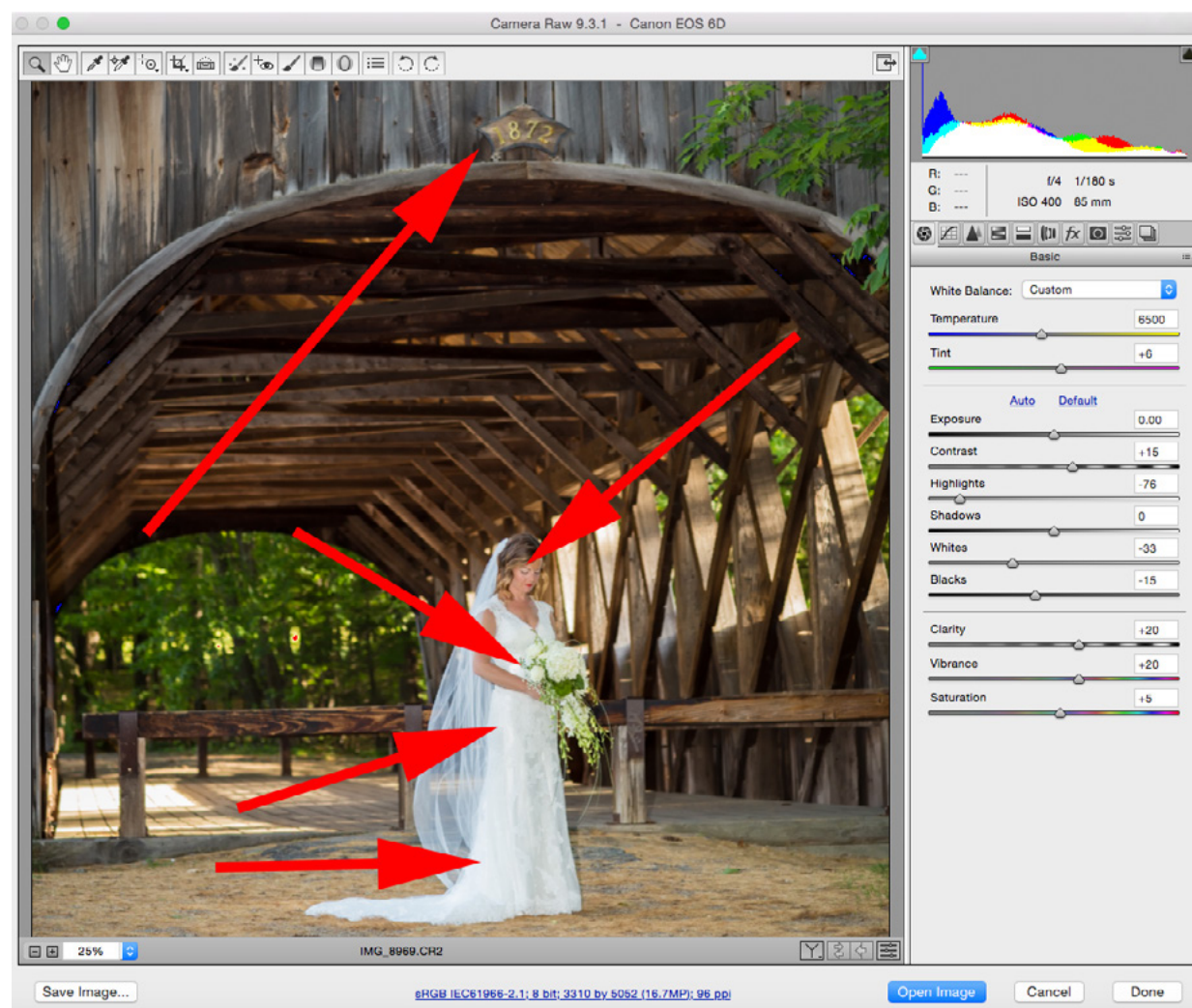


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 051

I always start by identifying the areas that I want to work on. In Reference 051, I have identified my areas. I'm going to slightly decrease the exposure on the flowers and dress to bring back some highlight detail. I'm going to sharpen the bride's hair, face, upper dress, and flowers. The age and location of this bridge was important to the bride. I'm going to make some localized adjustments to the "1872" to make it pop from its dark wooden background!

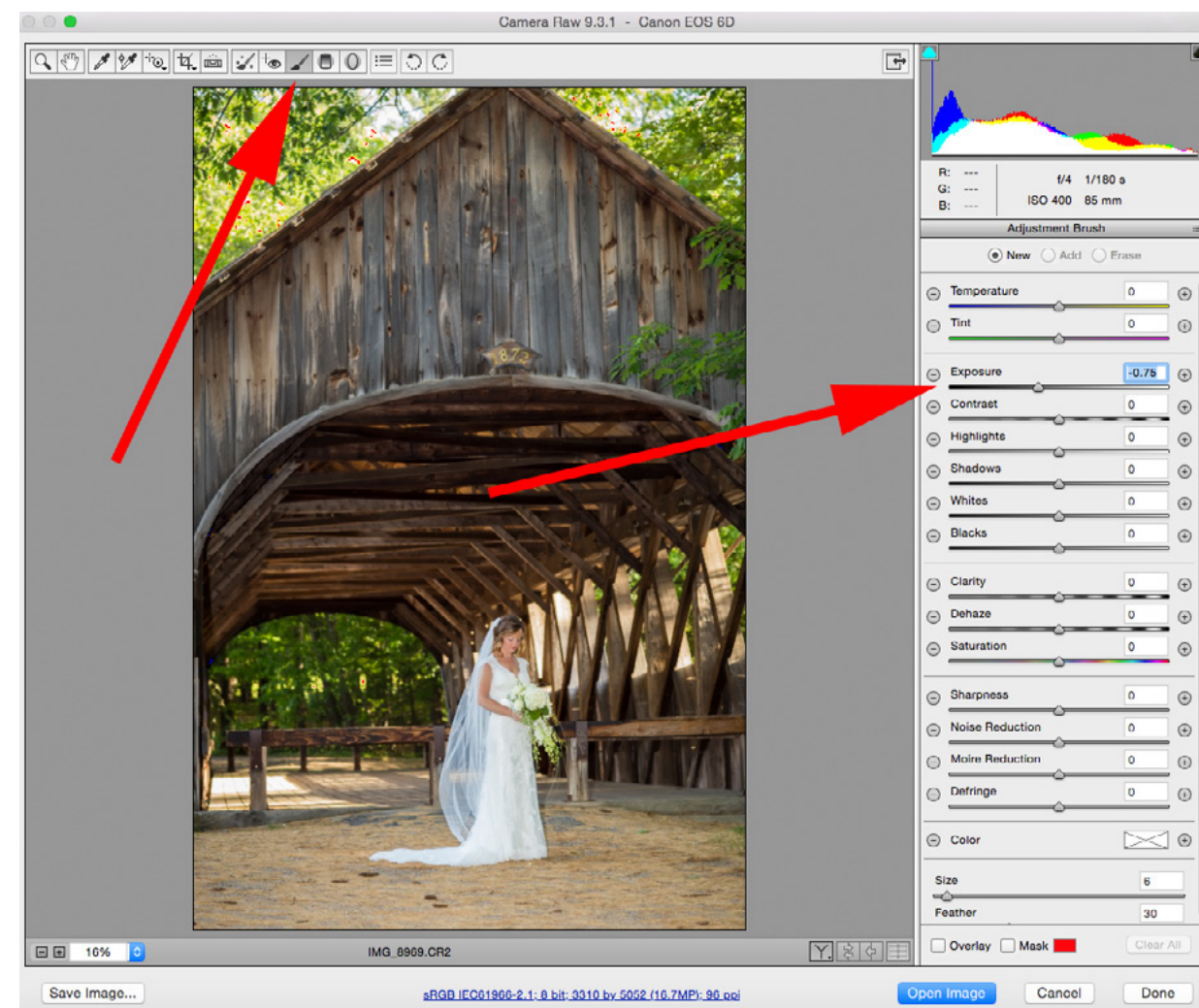


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 052

The left arrow points to the Adjustment Brush selection icon. The right arrow points to the toolbox. I can see that the last time I used the Adjustment Brush, I set the exposure to -0.75.

! This is important to note. The software does not automatically reset. When beginning work on a new image file, you have to reset all of the tools back to 0.

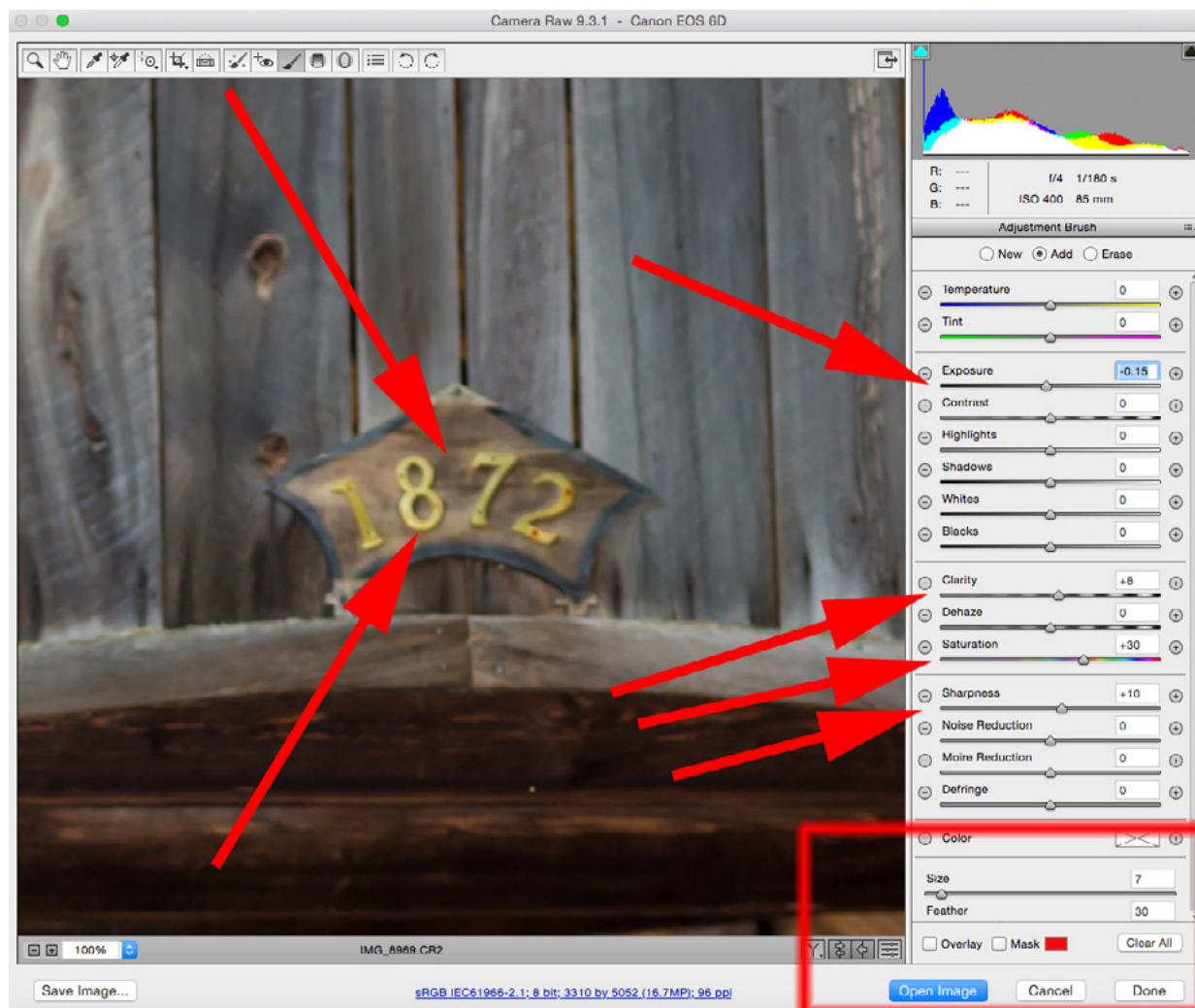


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 053

First of all, 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 natural looking. I want to make the sign pop out a little bit from the bridge. But, I don't want to make it look like a neon sign glowing up there. Again, I'm not going to go into a lot of details about the "how." This is my workflow.

I adjust the various sliders to what my experience tells me will give the results that I'm trying to achieve. In this case, decreased the exposure, increased the clarity, increased the saturation, and slightly increased the sharpness.

Key Lesson: If you're using post-production to sharpen something up 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. The localized sharpening with the Adjustment Brush allows me to (generally) only have to apply very little global sharpening later. That makes my file look better, and 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 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!

(Reference 053 – red box in the lower right corner.) Select the "Overlay" and "Mask" boxes. This will allow you to see the mask that you're going to paint.

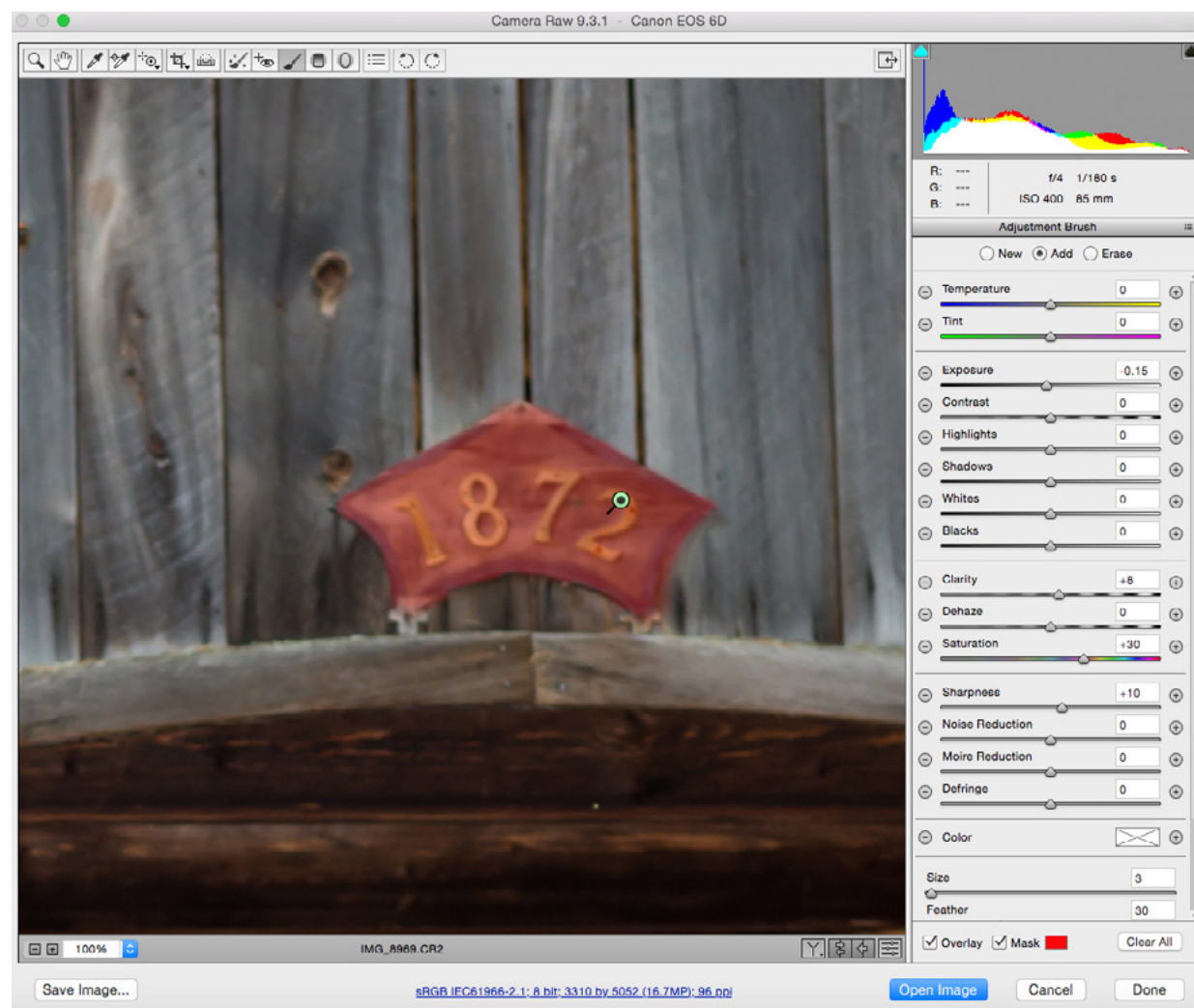


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 054

In Reference 054, you can see how easy it is to create a very localized and accurate mask. Take notice that I adjusted my brush size from 7 to 3. I used the 7 brush to paint the large areas, and I used the 3 brush to get into the tight corners. Once you're happy with the mask, click the Overlay and Mask boxes to turn them off. You will now be able to see the effect that the sliders have had on your masked area. You can adjust them as necessary.

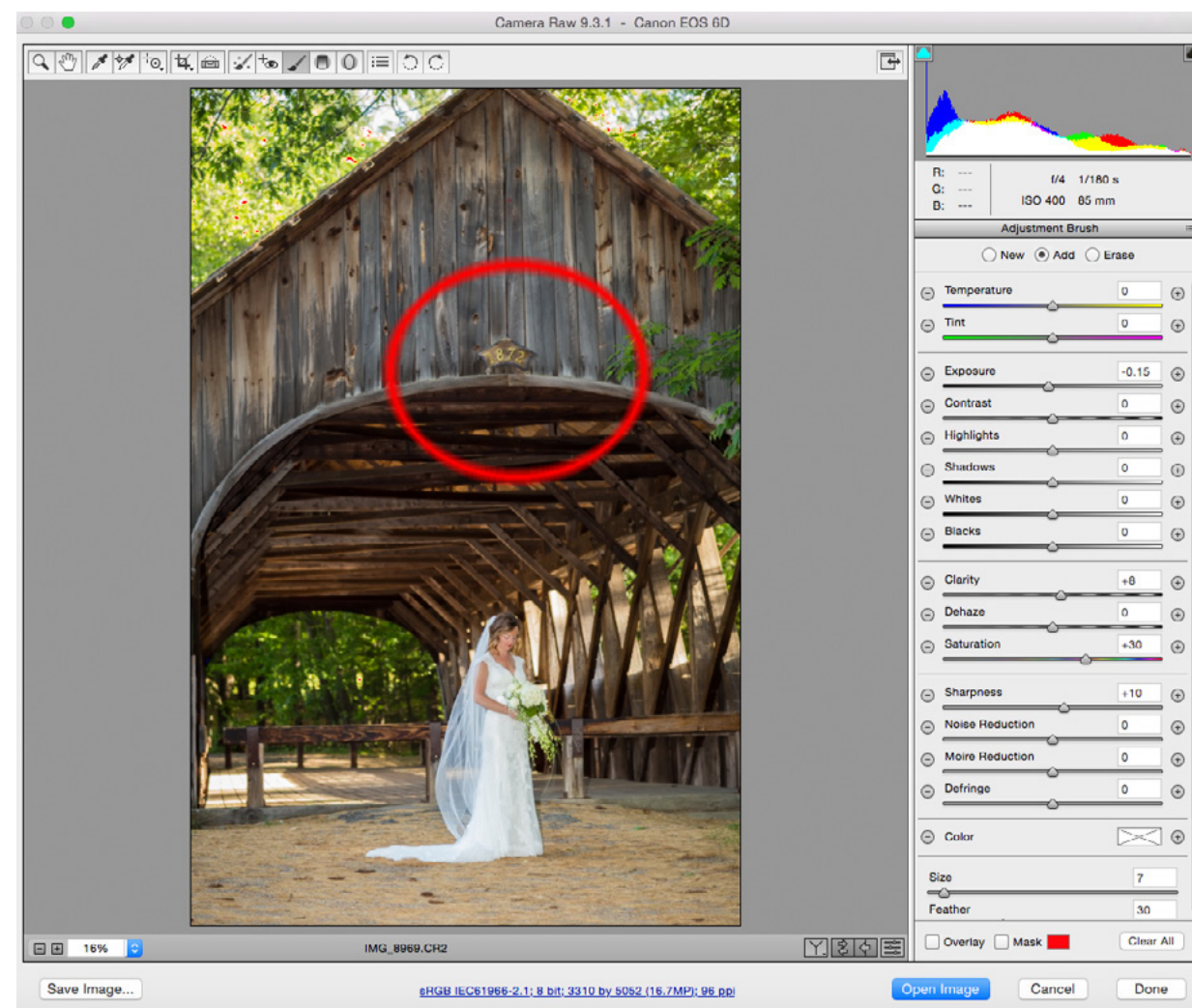


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 055

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

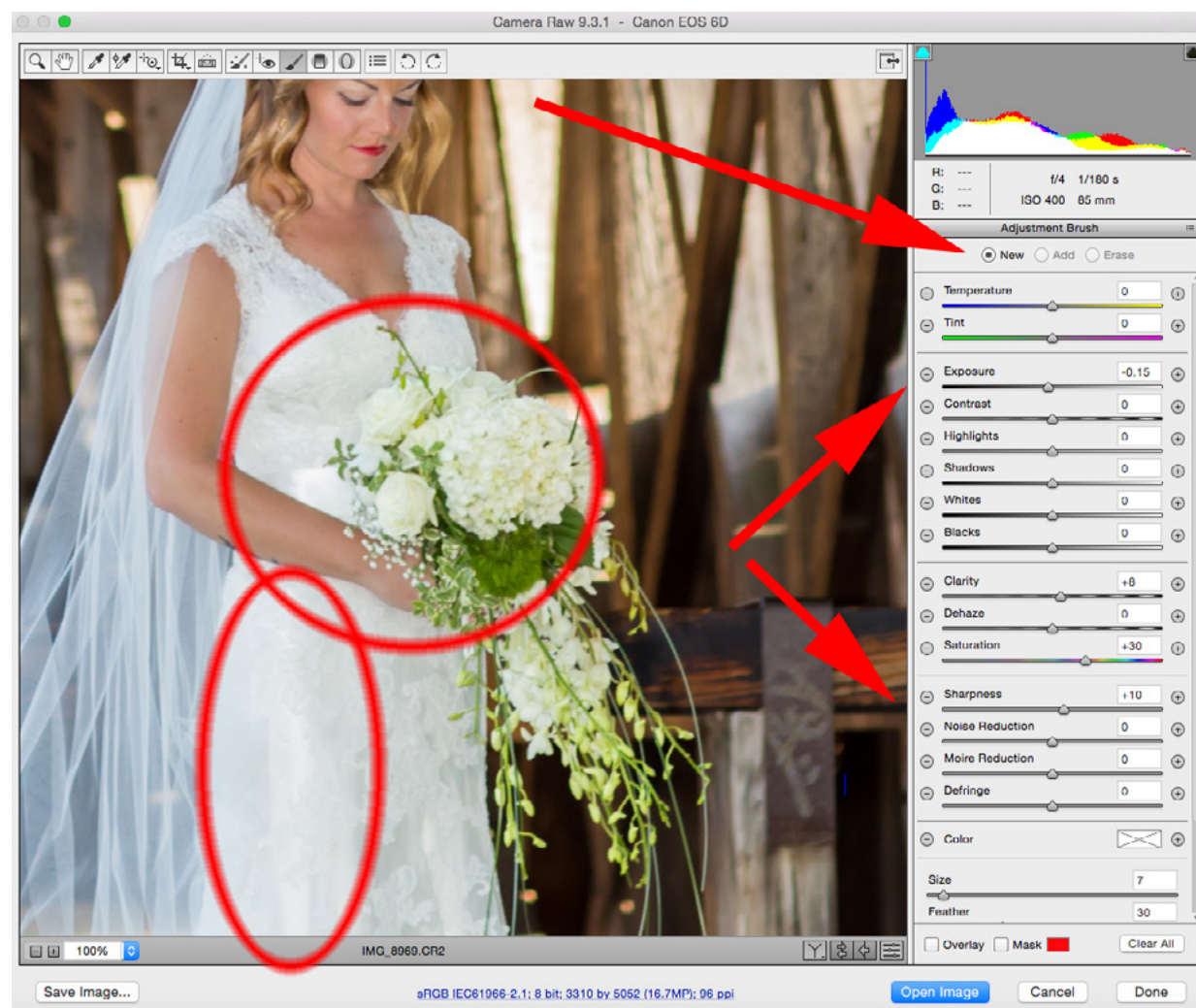


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 056

Now we are going to work on the dress and the flowers.

! This is very important! You must click "New." If you don't, you will simply be adding this area to the mask with the 1872 sign. Each area should get its own mask. After we click "New," we must reset the sliders to what experience tells us will give us the result that we're looking for. Take notice in Reference 056; even though we clicked "New,"

the sliders are all at the positions that we left them when working on the sign. With every "New" mask, you must reset the sliders to 0.

Key Lesson: An easy way to reset a slider to 0 is to place your cursor over the triangular shaped slider and double click.

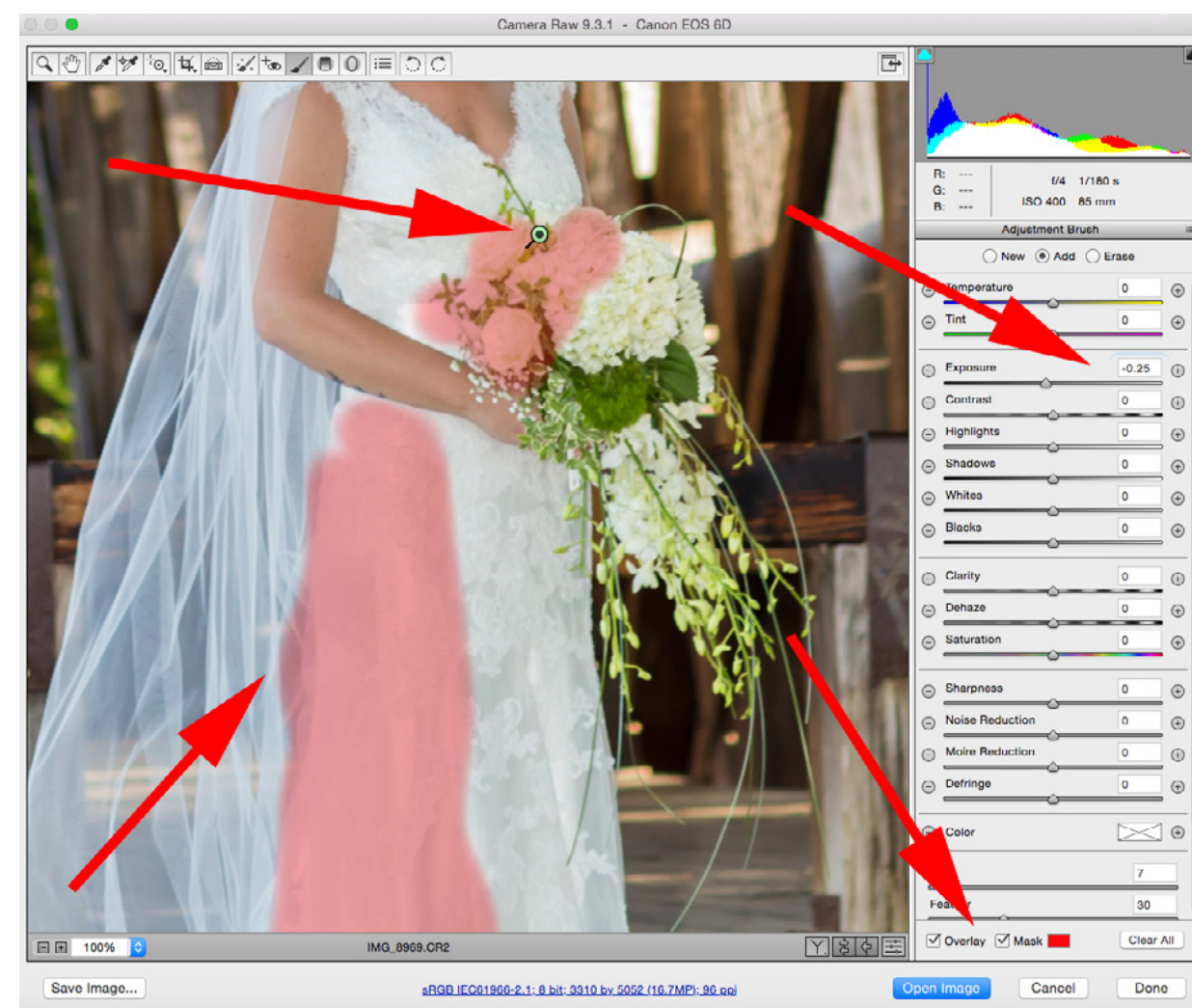


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 057

Reference 057 shows us the mask that we will use to adjust the flowers and the dress. I want to point out several things.

The lower left arrow shows where my mask “overran” the area that I want to work on. I can correct for that by selecting “Erase” (in the upper right area of the toolbox) and then painting over that area again.

The upper left arrow shows a pin with a green head. This means that this is the active mask that is being worked on.

My initial guess was to set the Exposure at -0.25.

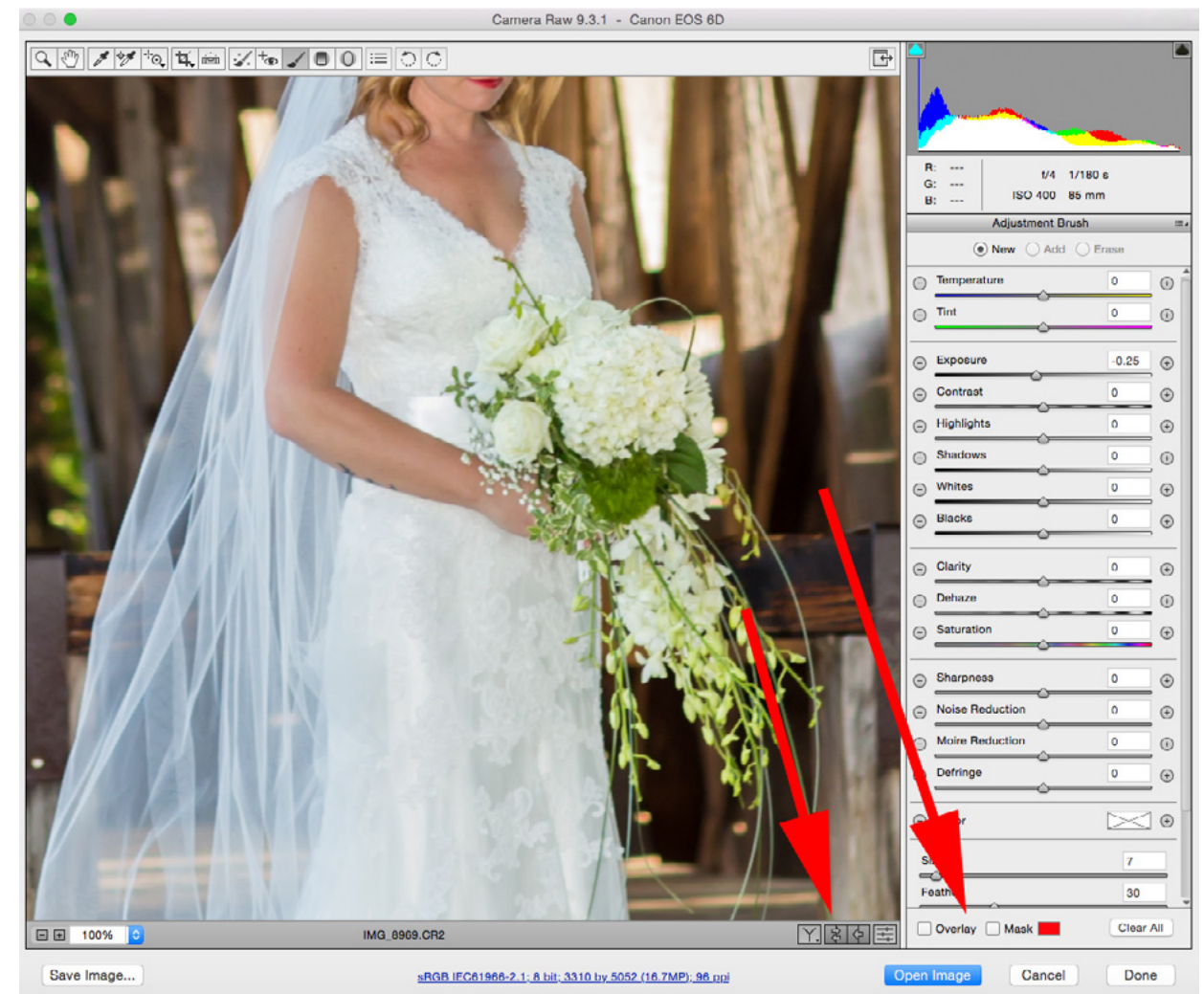


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 058

In Reference 058, you can see that I turned the Overlay and Mask off. My guess of a -0.25 for the Exposure adjustment looks pretty good. Notice the left arrow pointing at the series of boxes at the bottom right of the Preview Window. These are different methods of seeing a “Before and After” preview of your changes to a particular mask. My favorite is the second from the left. You just left-click it repeatedly to see your changes go on and off.

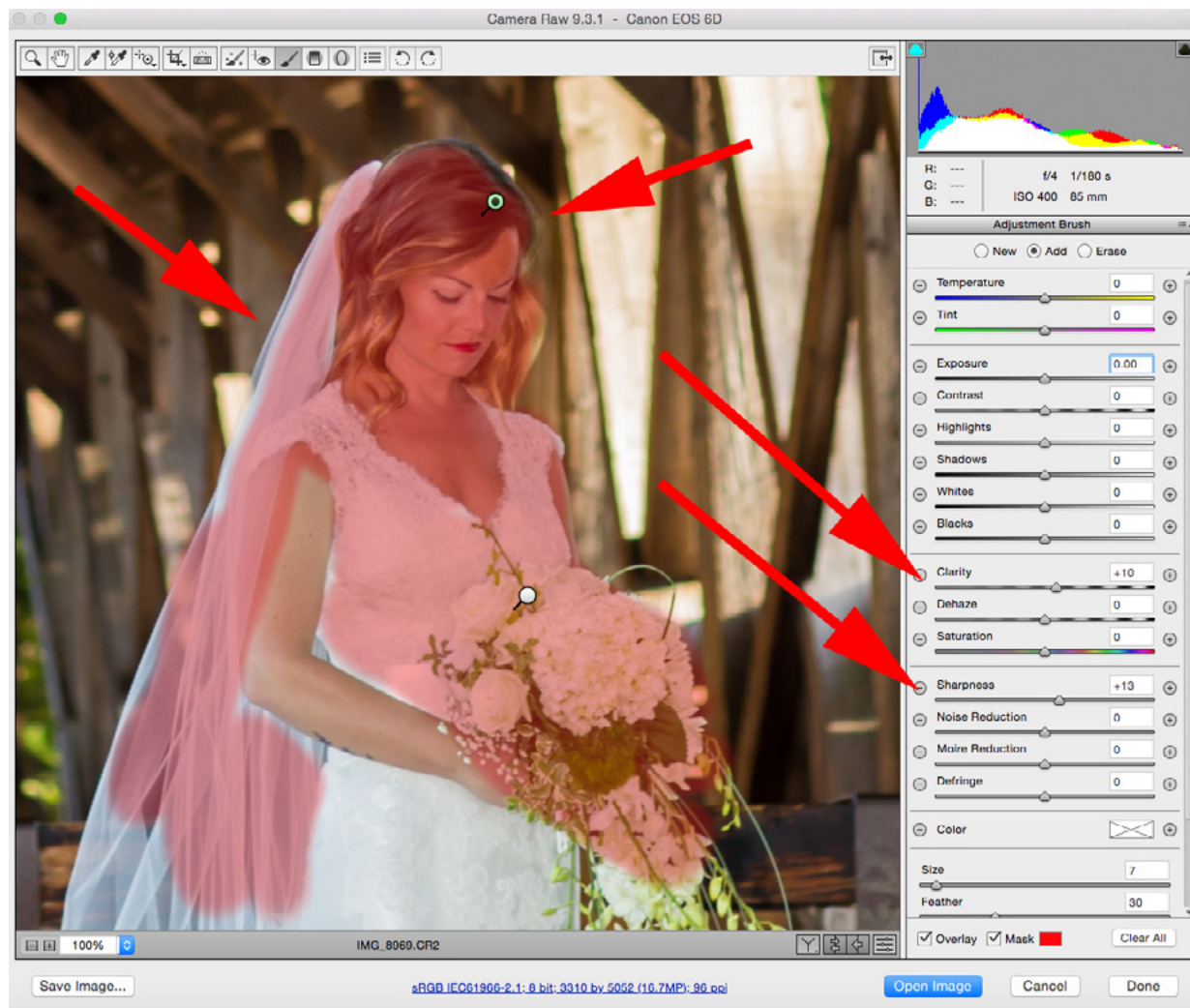


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 059

Reference 059 details our last edit with the Adjustment Brush. We are now going to “sharpen up” the areas of the bride that we want to be the focal point of the photograph. (Remember the tool of composition that we discussed earlier: Point of Focus.) I want you to notice the settings on the right. I’ve used Clarity and Sharpness. I want you to also notice that the numbers are fairly low. When using this technique, bear this in mind:

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

You don’t want to sharpen SO MUCH that it becomes obvious. This may take some practice. I’m going to show you a final version of this sharpening technique. Study it carefully and then go back and look at an earlier version. Despite these low settings, you will see an obvious difference!

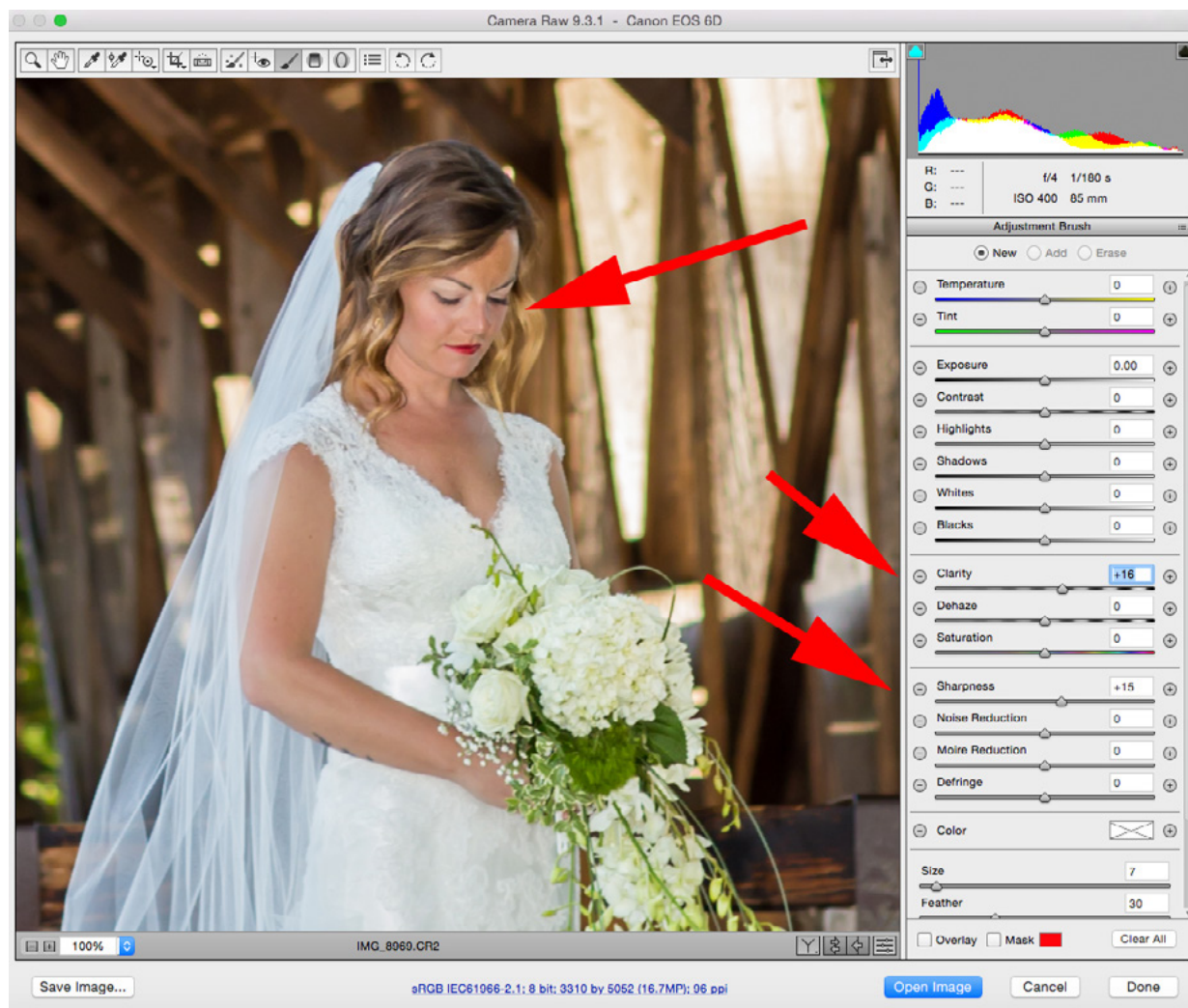


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 060

In Reference 060, you will see that after turning my Mask off, I decided to increase my settings slightly. Take a good look around the area that the left-pointing arrow is directing you to. Study it, and then go look at an earlier version. You'll see how much better she looks (sharper). She will now literally pop of the page even though she is surrounded by all of those other objects and that landscape!

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 my 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 but only do very light sharpening.

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.

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

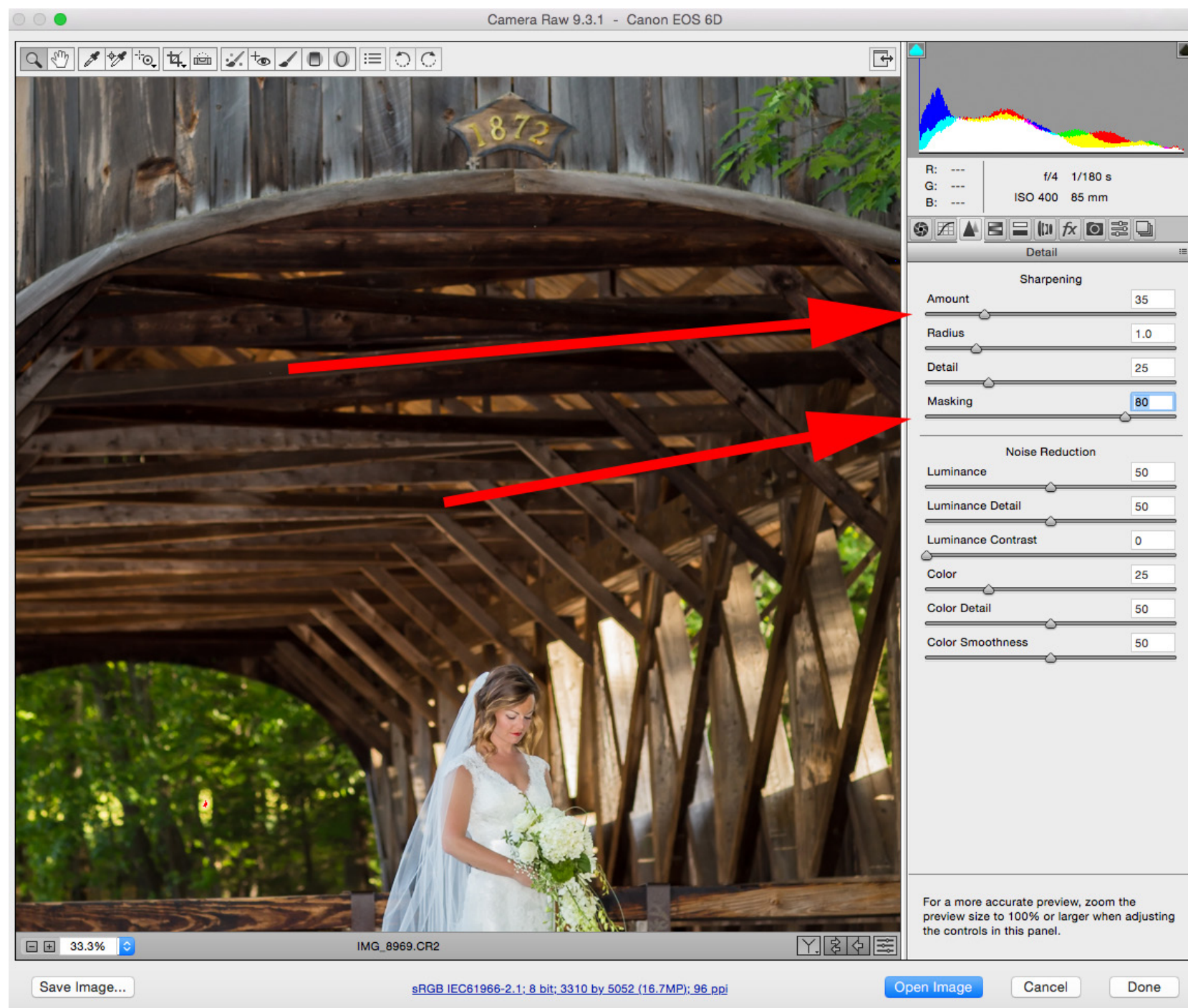
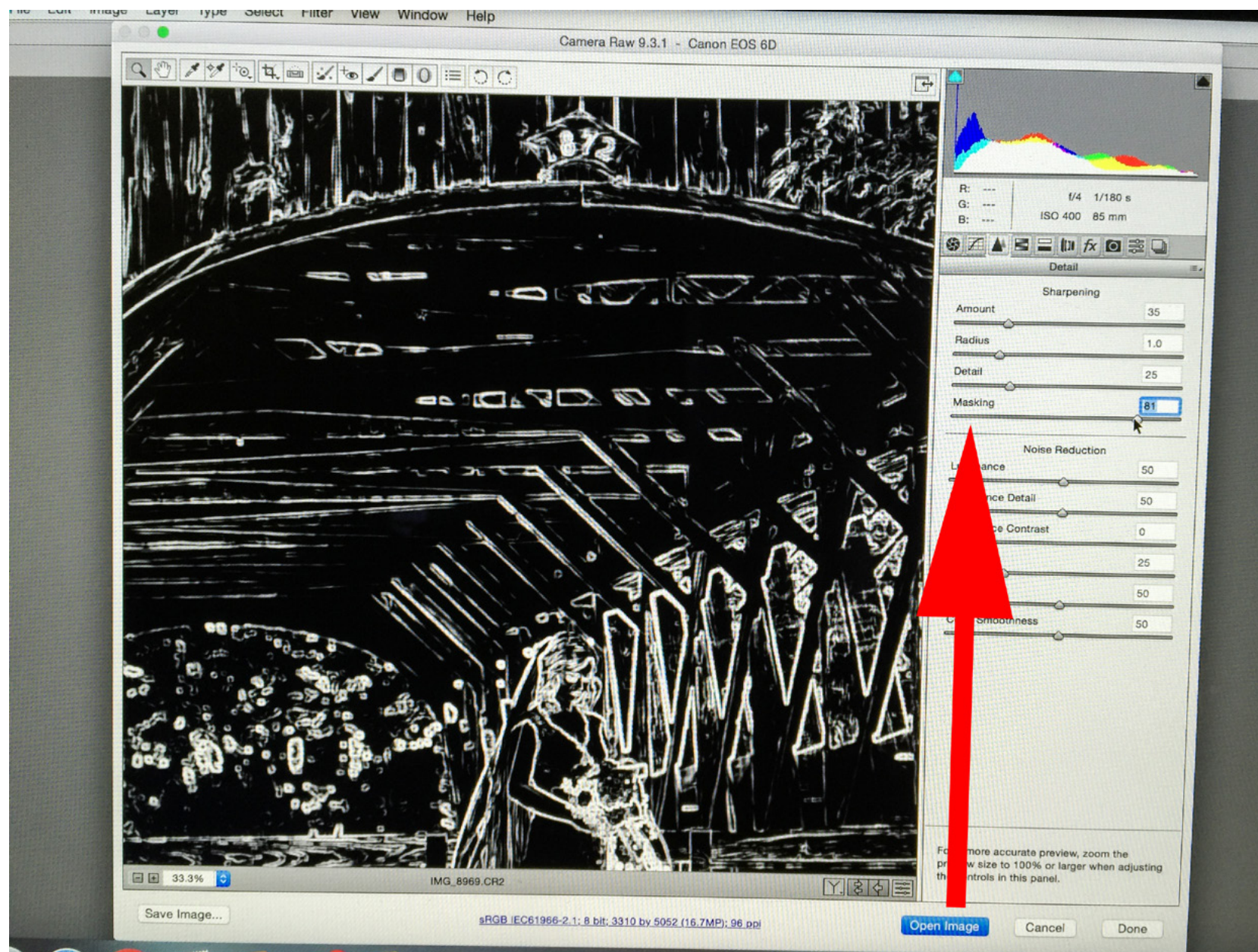


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 061

Set your magnification to the largest size it can be—where you can see the area that you did the localized sharpening plus as much of the background as necessary.

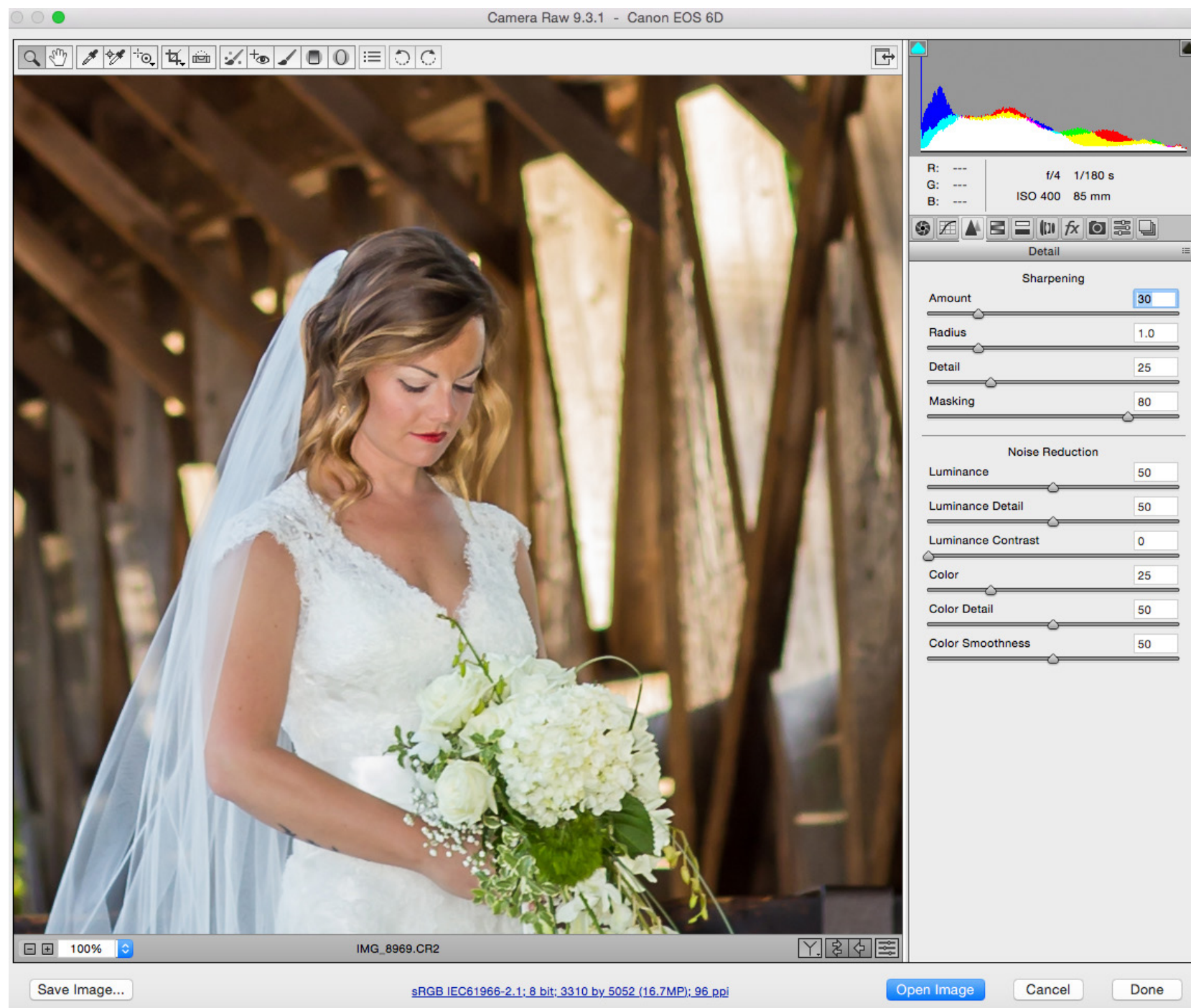
Here is how I set up for the bridal portrait: in my initial adjustment, I set the sharpening at 35. My opinion is that with a properly executed photograph, you should never have to set the global “Sharpening” adjustment higher than 50, and I almost never go higher than 40. Most of my sharpening adjustments are between 25 and 40.

I set the Masking slider at 80. What is that? This is the cool trick I was telling you about.



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 062

Before you move the “Masking” slider, hold down the “option” and “command” keys (Apple Computer). Then move the slider to the right. Image 062 shows you what you will see. This tool masks the sharpening effect to the white areas and allows you to critically sharpen with less 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.)



After applying your initial sharpening and masking, zoom in to 100%. 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 sharpening amount to 30.

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 063

THAT IS THE COMPLETION OF THE Fundamental EDITS LIST IN PHOTOSHOP!

Before we take a look at our final photograph, I want to point out something that caught me by surprise—several times—when I was first starting out with the Camera Raw Processing Window.

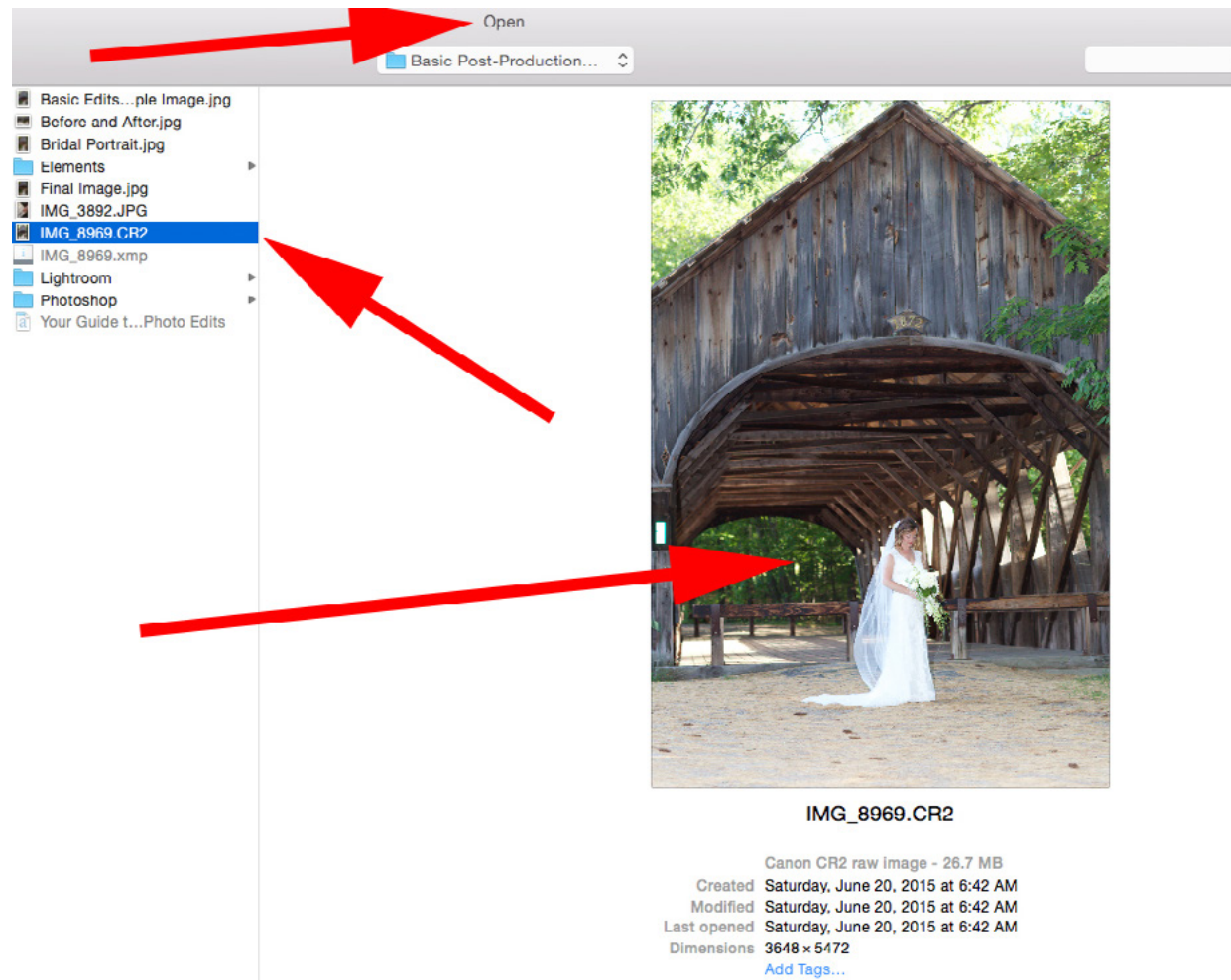


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 064

We are done with our Fundamental Edits List. Let's say that we close the file and we don't return to it for a month. When we return, we navigate to where the file is but when we click on the file, the preview image looks unchanged! Where did all of our edits go? When opening a camera raw file in Photoshop, the preview does not show the edits that were previously performed. This means that there is no visual reference to indicate that you have worked on this file. You may think that pointing this out sounds ridiculous. However, as you gather thousands and thousands of files, quickly finding the one that you have worked on will be a plus in your life. Here is how I handle this situation.

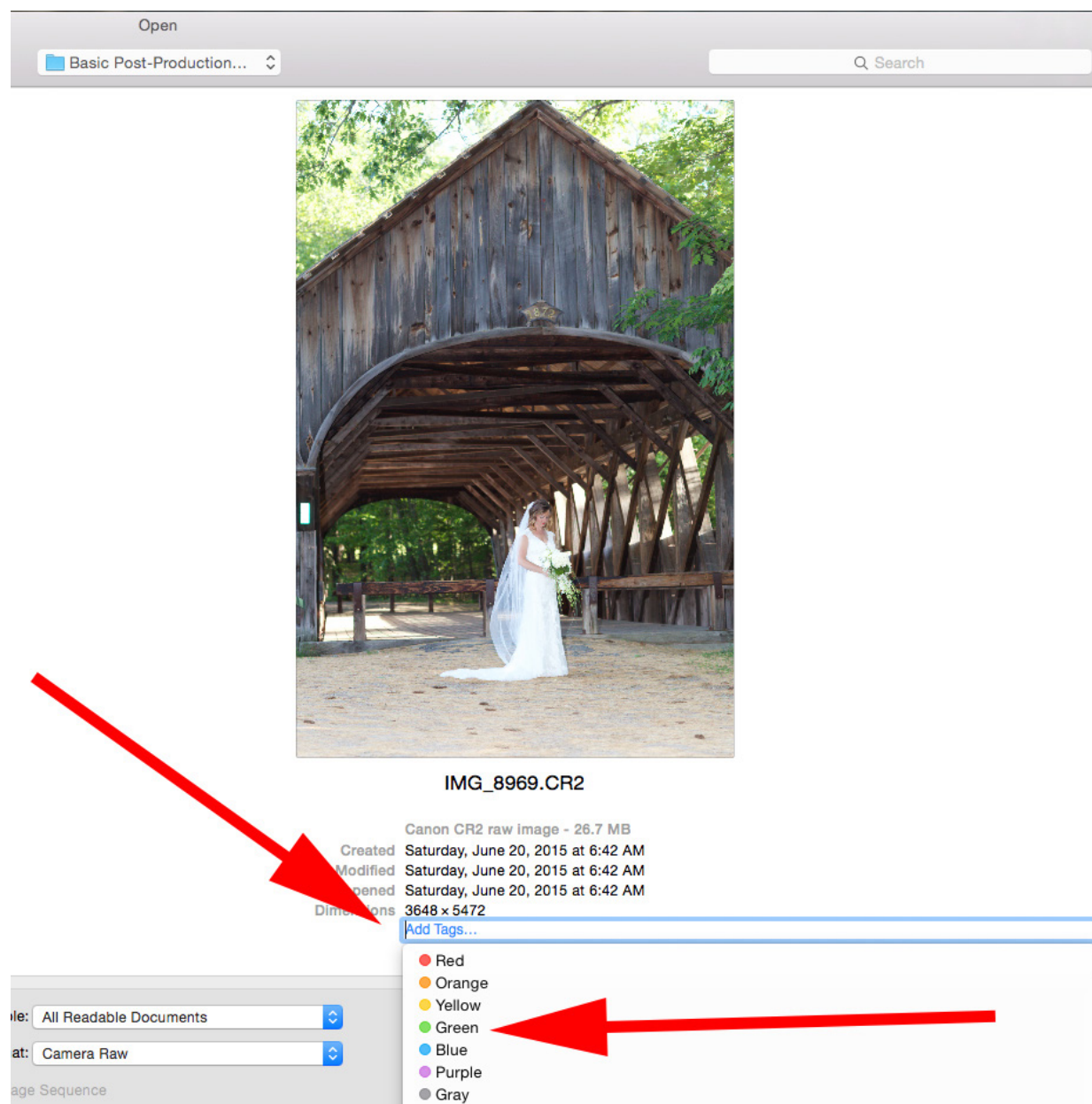


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 065

After completing my Fundamental Edits List, I go to reopen the image in Photoshop. When the "Open" window appears, I click "Add Tags." I then click "Green."

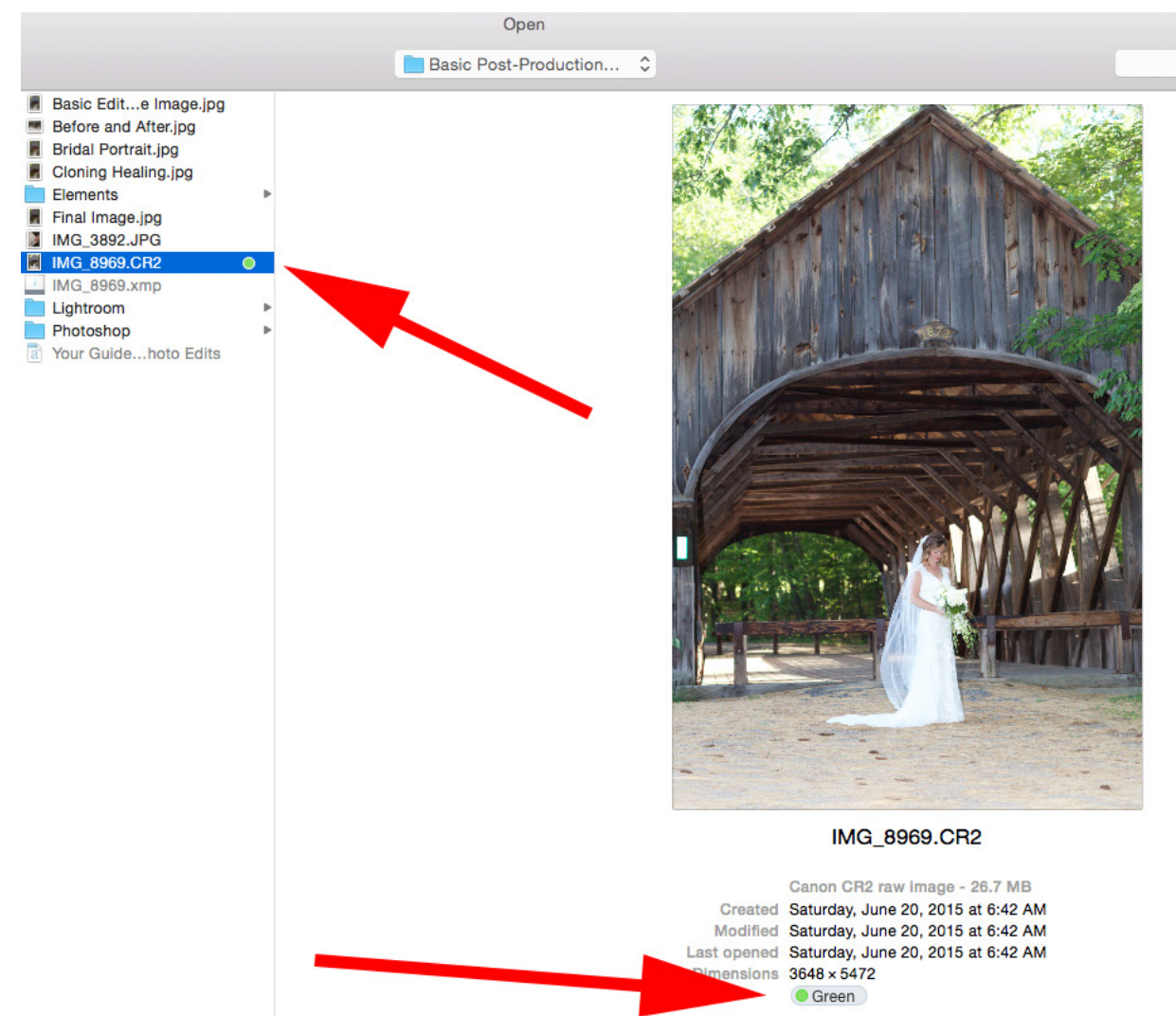


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 066

As you can see in Reference 066, when I go to open the file now, there is a green tag by the preview image and in the file list. This tells me that I have previously applied my Fundamental Edits List to this image!



Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 067

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

I consider these dark areas at our bride's feet to be a problem of composition. I don't want them there. There are two tools that I would use to remove them: 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 Edits List. I bring it up for this reason. There is a clone and heal tool located within the Camera Raw Processing Window. However, I don't like it. I think it's clunky and not as accurate to use as the same tools within Photoshop.

When I show you my finished photograph, you'll notice that those spots are gone. I did that final step within Photoshop.



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 068

Here is our final image using Photoshop for the Fundamental Edits List.

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 Edits List in the Camera Raw Processing Window?
5. True or False: If the vignette turns highlights gray, there is nothing that you can do about it.
6. True or False: The Dehaze tool can provide a wonderful enhancement to underwater photographs.
7. True or False: The Adjustment Brush resets all of the sliders to 0 when you click "New."
8. True or False: In the Adjustment Brush preview window, a green pin means that you have applied a color adjustment to that mask.
9. True or False: You should ALWAYS apply global sharpening before localized sharpening.
10. True or False: In the Adjustment Brush preview window, the red mask indicates areas that will not be affected by the changes applied.
11. True or False: Once you've made your changes in the Camera Raw Processing Window and you've saved your file, you'll easily be able to locate that file in the future.
12. When sharpening in the Camera Raw Processing Window, you can apply masking by holding down which keys and moving the Masking slider?

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

05

THE FUNDAMENTAL EDITS LIST USING LIGHTROOM

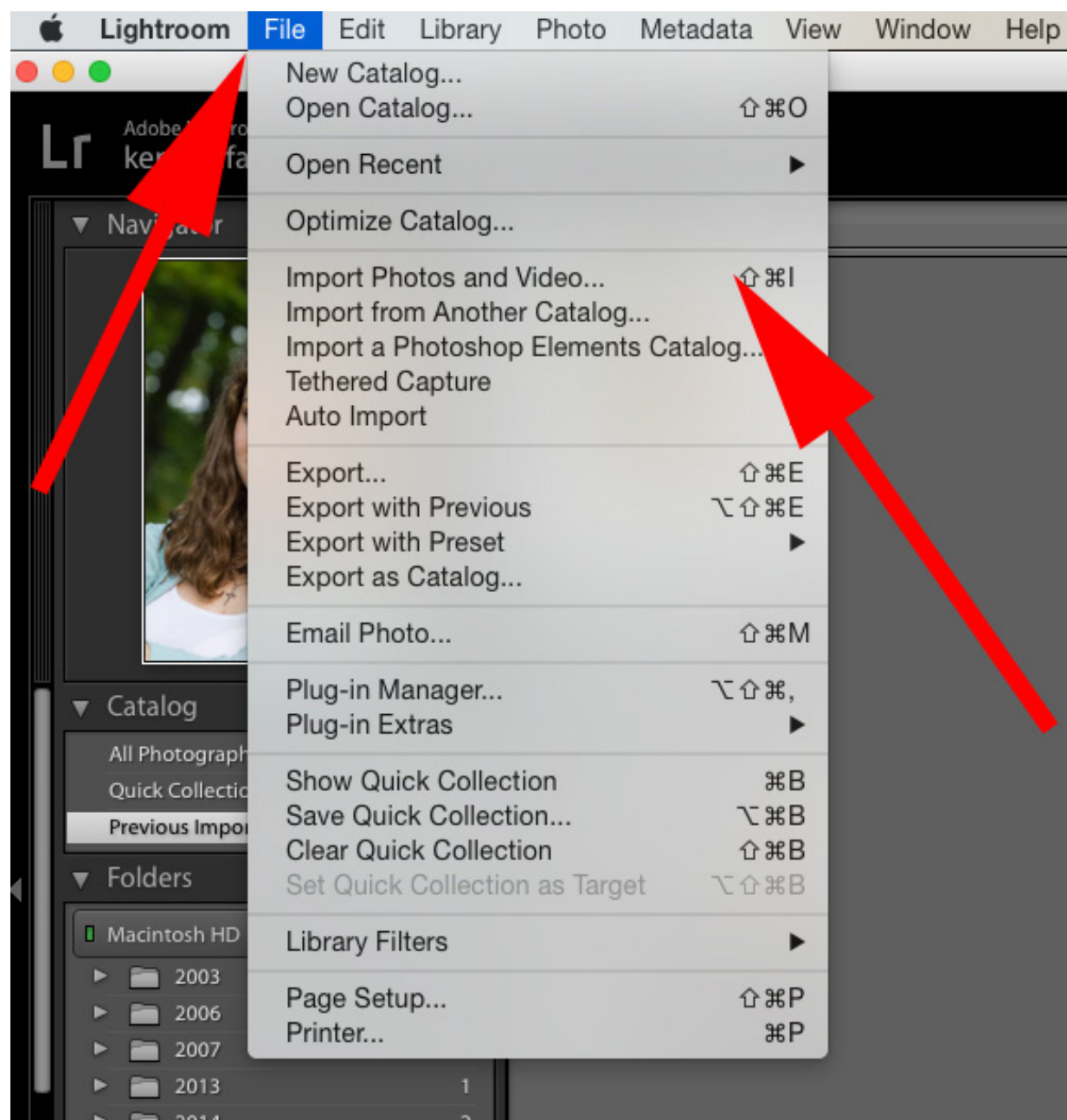


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 069

If you're a Lightroom user and you skipped directly to this section, I want you to **stop**. Go back and read the Photoshop section using this link. There is a lot of information that I put into that Photoshop section that will not be repeated here. I'm talking about the who, what, where, and why of the edits included in the Fundamental Edits List. In this section, I'm simply going to show you how to physically do it.

Please. Go back and read the Photoshop section before continuing.

Step One – Opening the Image

The majority of you are likely to be Lightroom users. While I do own the program, it's not my favorite, and the reason is simple. I began with Photoshop back in 1993. Long ago, I had developed my own system of file organization, and that's what I don't like about Lightroom. It was originally designed to be (primarily) a file organization tool—a database if you will—and the editing component was secondary.

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

Now that we have that out of the way, let's talk about 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.

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

What this means is 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" drop-down menu and select "Import Photos and Video."

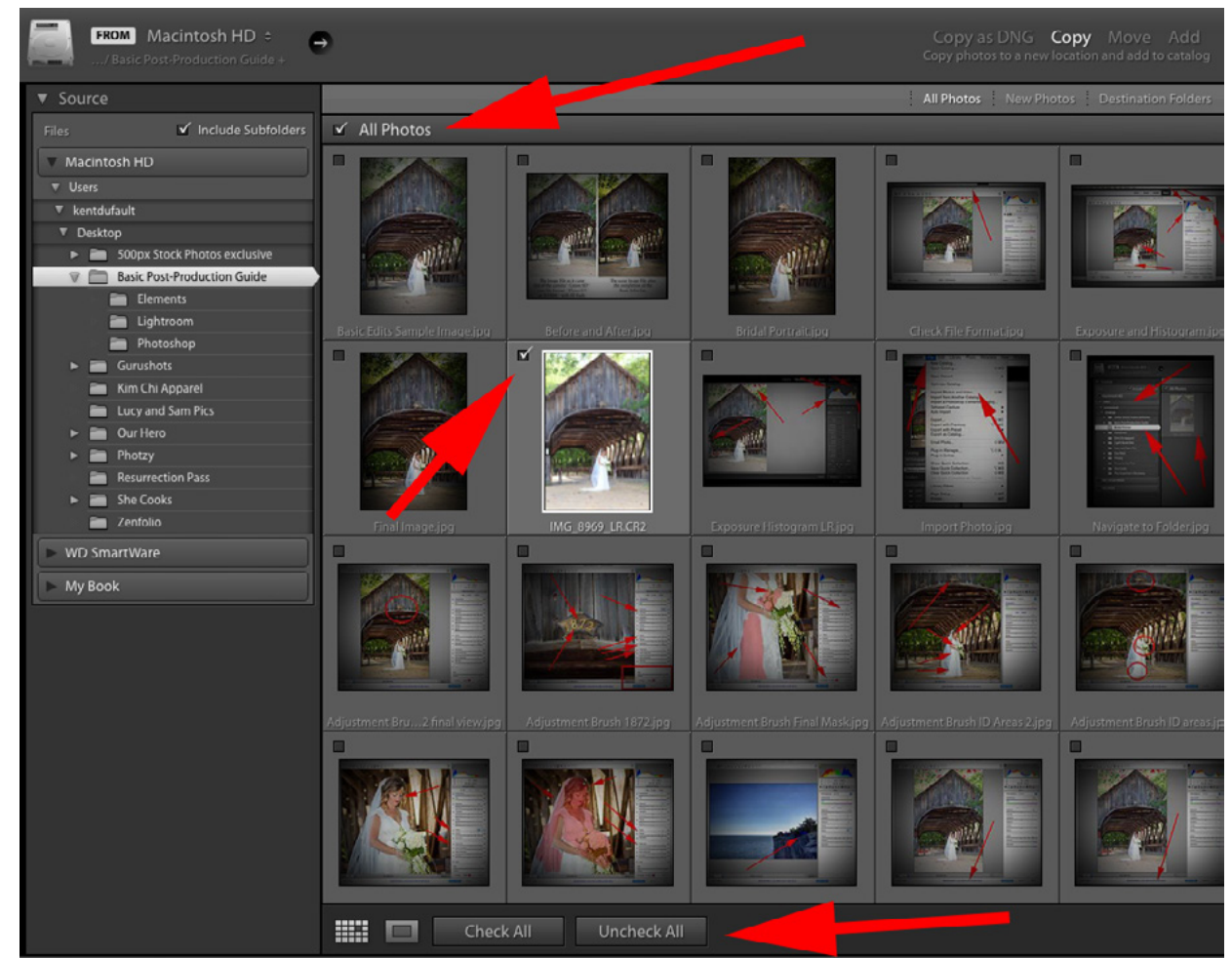


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 070

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:

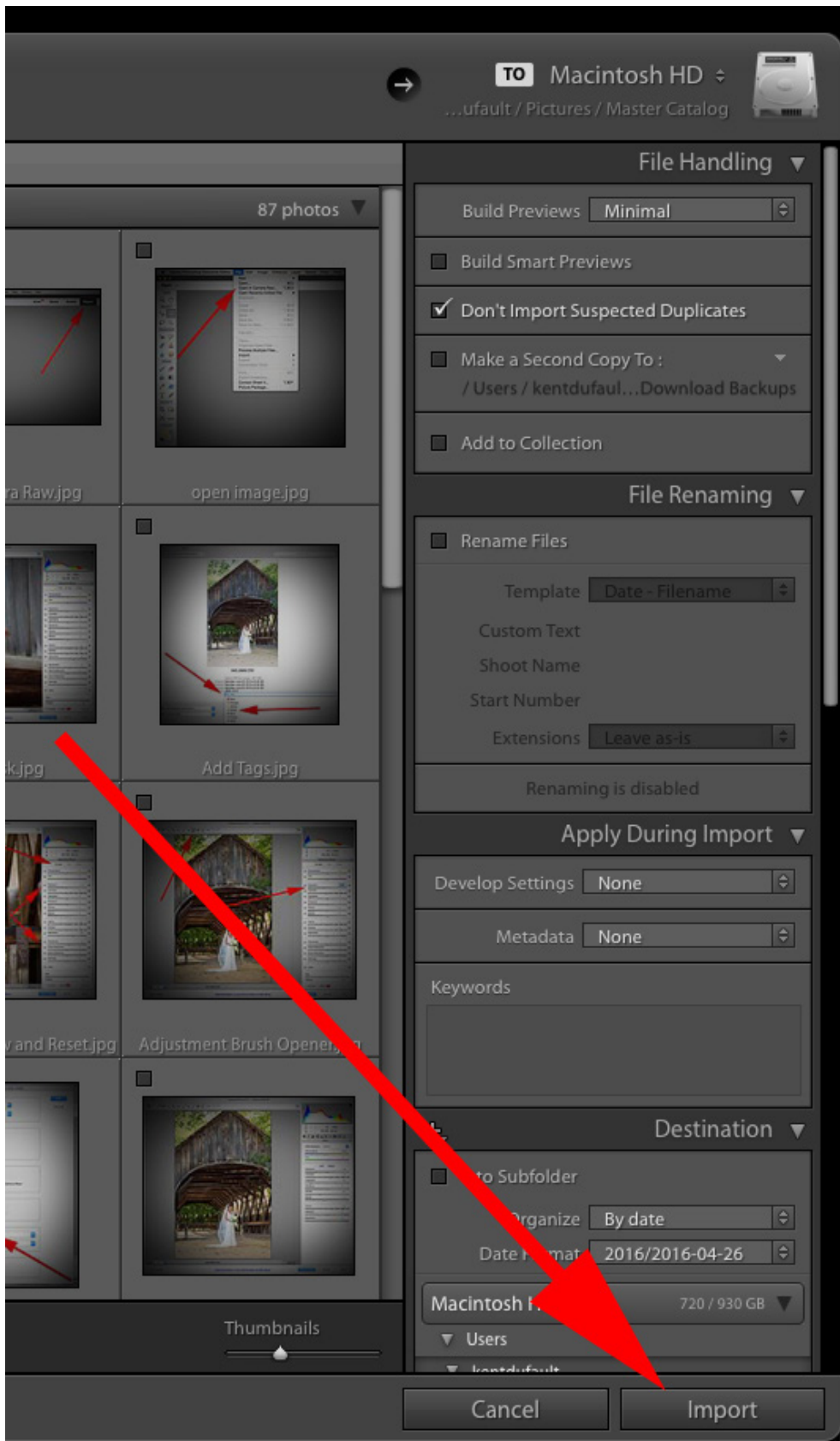


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 071

By default, it will have all of the photos in that folder checked. If you don't want to import all of the photos, you must uncheck the ones that you don't want. In this case, I don't want to import all of the photos; I only want the one. So, I clicked "Uncheck All" and then selected the one file that I wanted.

If you've ever imported the file that you're looking for into Lightroom at a previous time in history, 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.) You'll have to go looking for it. You'll notice that I changed the file name of my bridal portrait so I could import it a second time.

Reference 071 shows you where the preference setting is for importing a duplicate image.

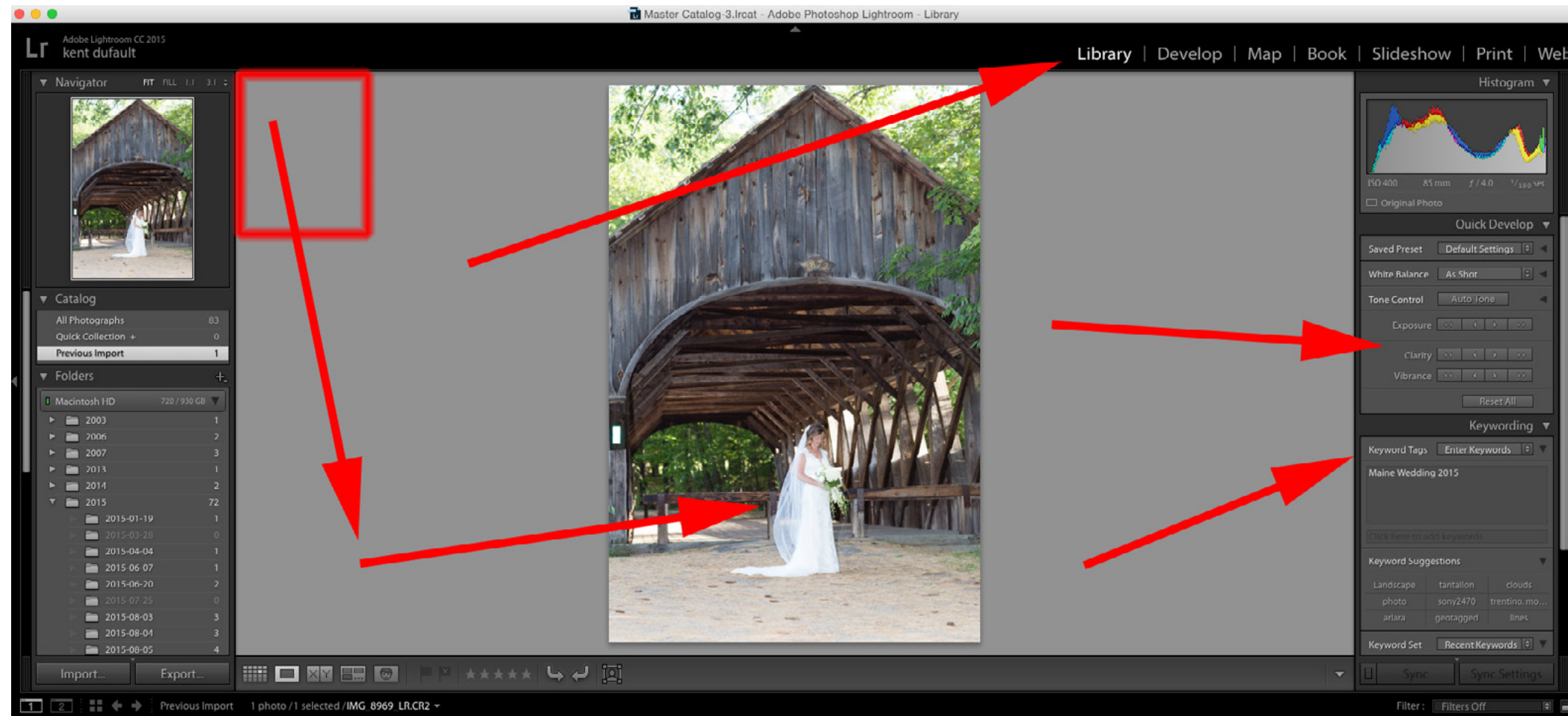


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 072

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

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

In Reference 072, the red box in the upper left illustrates the size of the preview image that will appear by default. If you double click that preview, it will give you a larger preview image that is centered in the preview space (as shown by the red arrows).

In the preview window, there are two toolbox areas: Quick Develop and Keywording.

I do not recommend using Quick Development. We won't be using it for this guide.

The Keywording component is important. As I mentioned earlier, Lightroom was originally intended to be a database management software. It has numerous tools for "marking" your image files with information. We are not going to get into that here. Notice that I did type in "Maine Wedding 2015." I can now do a search within the Lightroom Keyword List to locate my picture file.

Step Two – Crop the Image

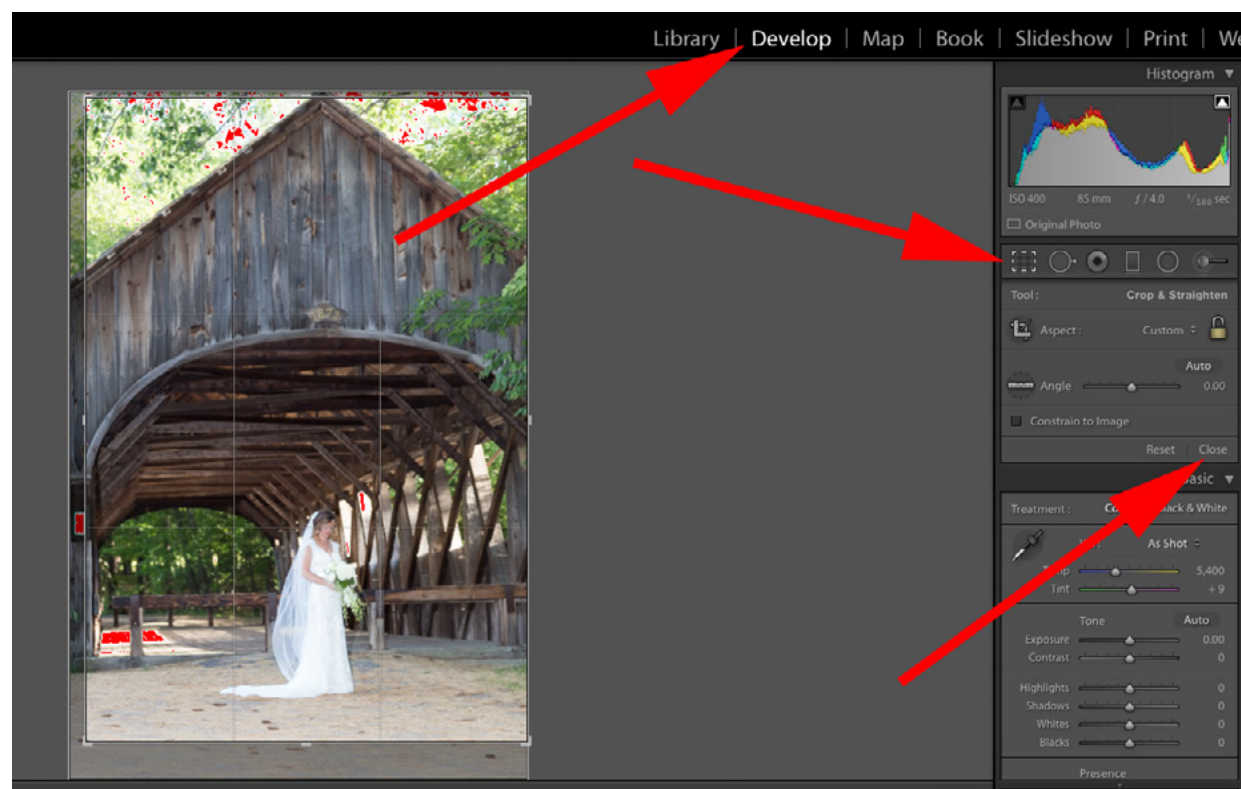


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 073

After we have selected, imported, and key-worded our bridal portrait, we must now move to the “Develop” module by clicking on the word, “Develop.” In Reference 073, the middle arrow points to the “Crop Tool,” which is located in the “Tool Bar” below the histogram.

We are going to step through our Fundamental Edits List in exactly the same order as we did in the Photoshop section of this guide.

Once you click the Crop tool, a new toolbox will appear below

it. Let’s take a close-up view of that toolbox.

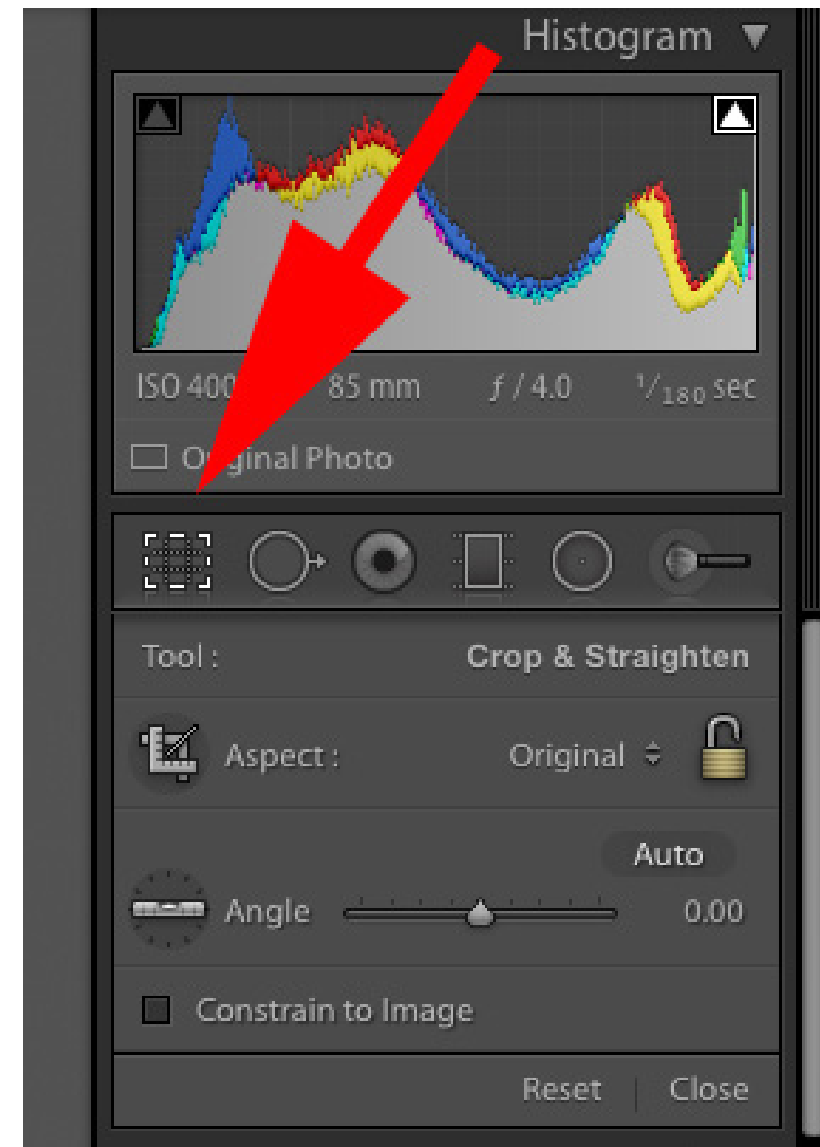


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 074

If you click to the left of the word “Aspect,” your cursor will either look like a crop tool or a set of arrows. The crop tool crops the image. The arrows will allow you to change the angle of the

image. This is redundant as just below there is a better way to change the angle. I always leave it set to the crop tool.

If you click on the word “Original,” it will give you a pop-up menu that displays different aspect ratios to crop the image. If you’re not sure what that means, go back and read the Photoshop section of this guide. [Use this link to go back to that section.](#)

For our bridal portrait, we are going to select “Custom” and crop 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 chose. 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 on its own. 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 Edits List, this does nothing for us.

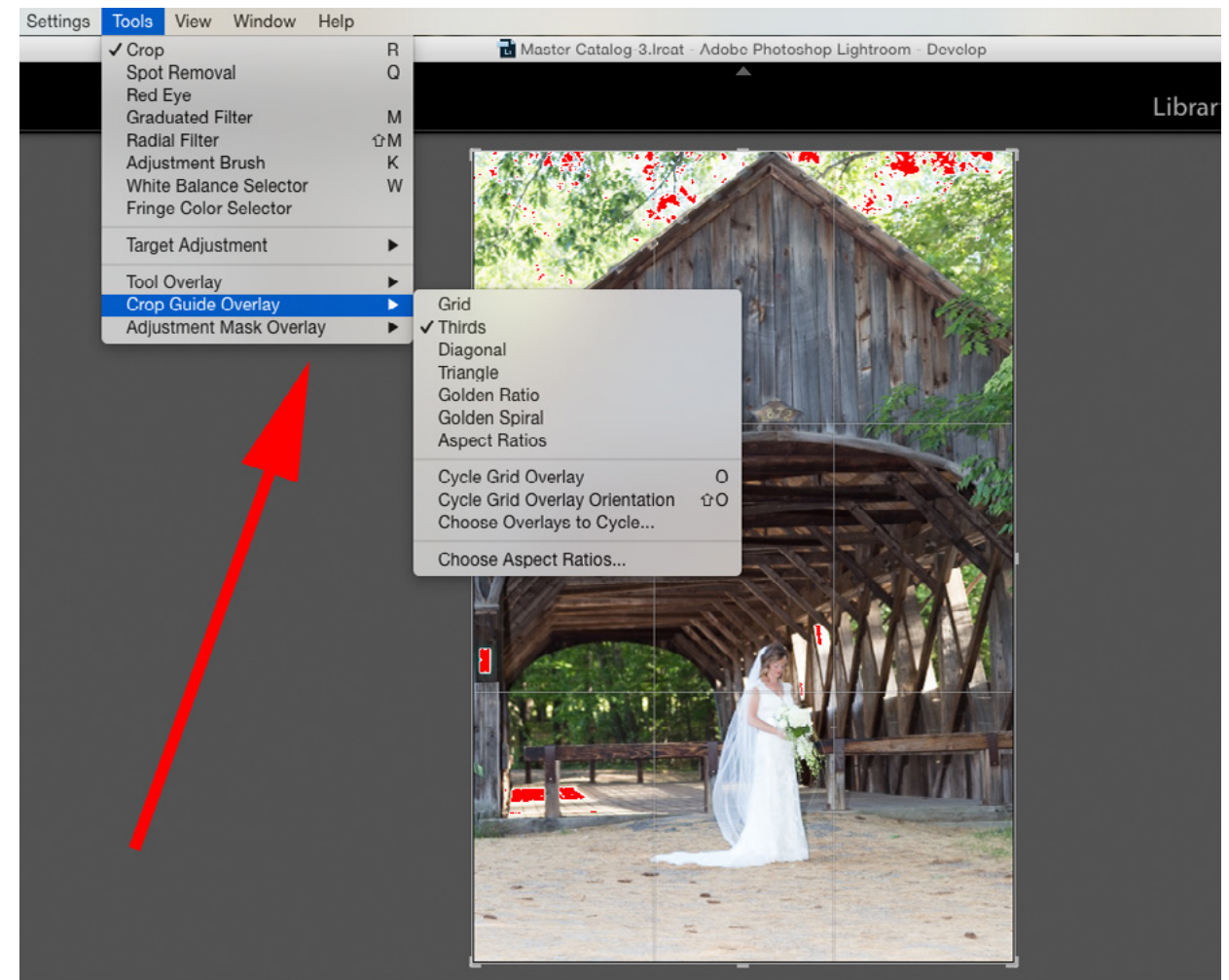



Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 075

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 075 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 a second time to close the Cropping tool options box.

Step Three – Noise Reduction

To get to the “Noise Reduction” component within Lightroom, we will scroll down the toolbox on the right of our screen until we see “Detail.” Click the triangular box next to the word “Detail.”

Three boxes will open up: a Preview box, a Sharpening box, and a Noise Reduction box.

Right now, we are only interested in the Noise Reduction feature.

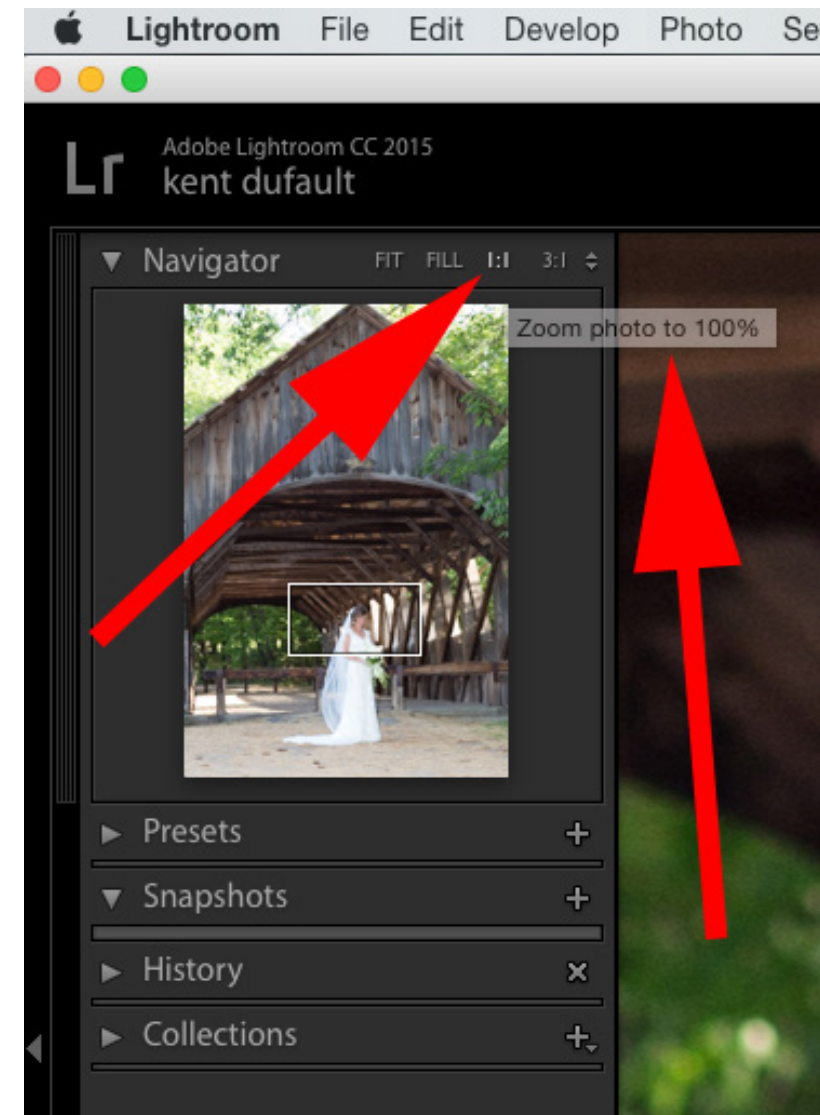


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 076

By default, your image will open in the Develop module at the “Fill” setting, which is showing you the entire image. For noise reduction (and sharpening), we always want to be viewing the image at 100%. Move your cursor over to the “Navigator” window, which is located on the left. Click the “1:1” icon. This will zoom your photo to a 100% preview.

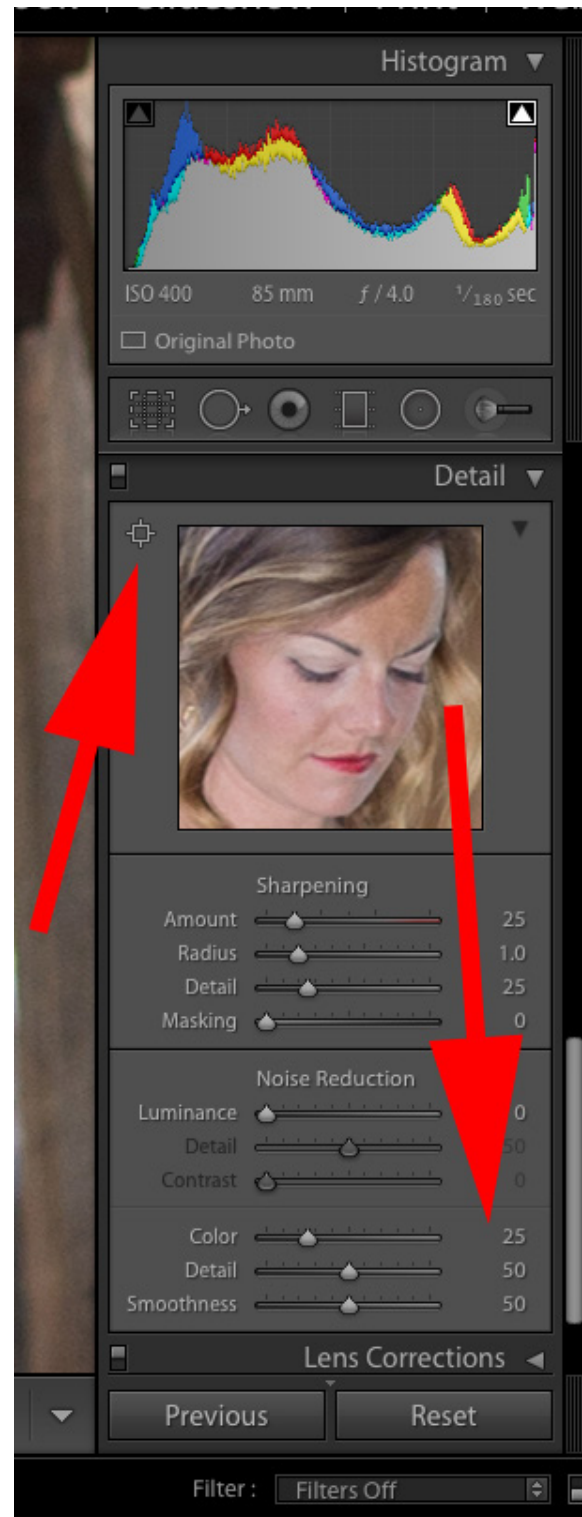


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 077

Key Lesson: If you wish to quickly toggle back and forth between the "Fill" view and the "100%" view, press the "z" key on your keyboard.

Observe Reference 077; the left arrow points to a small "Reticle" icon. If you click on the icon and then move it over to the larger preview window, anywhere that you click within the frame will be shown at a 100% view in the smaller preview window in the details tab.

This is very useful to monitor more than one area at a 100% view. Let's say, for example, when your image is set to 100% you can't monitor your main subject and some heavily shadowed areas along the edge of the frame, without having to scroll around. You can position one or the other in the main preview box and then use the "Reticle" to highlight the other area in the smaller box.

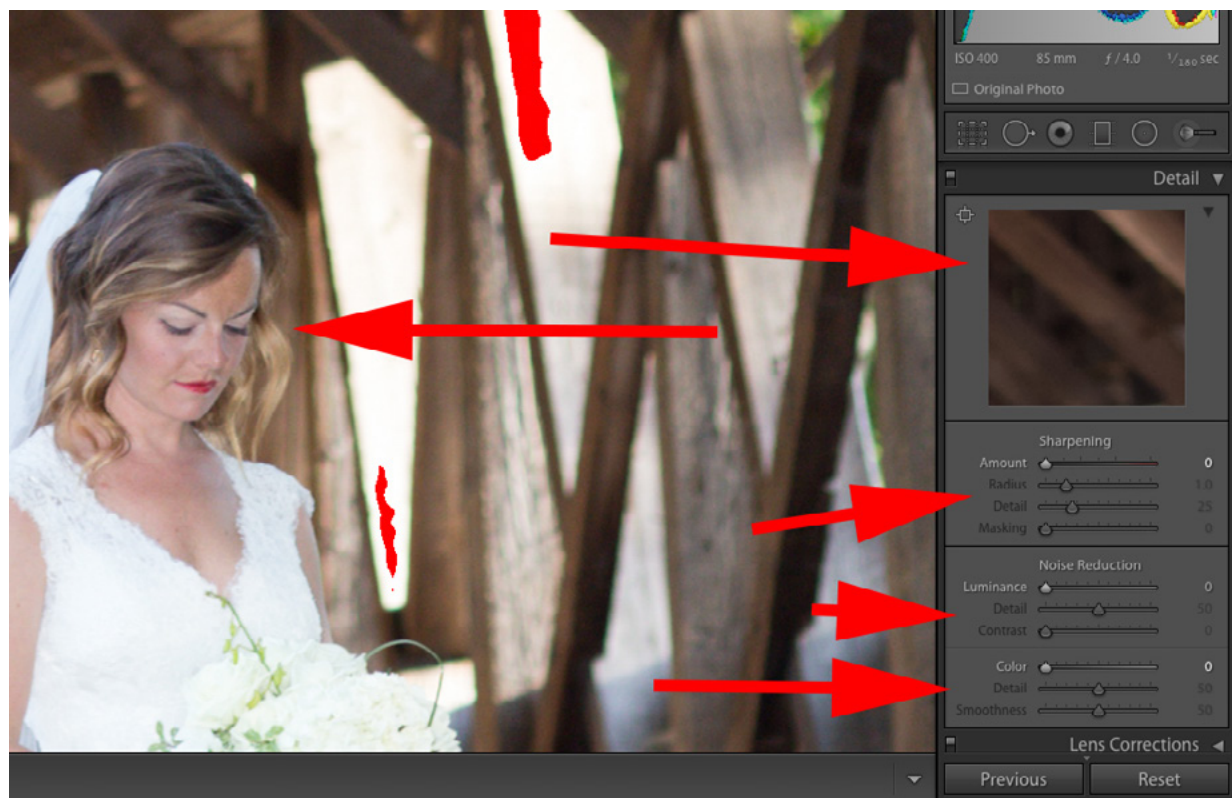


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 078

In Reference 078, I have positioned the bride as my main concern in the larger preview window, and I've positioned a shadow area in the rafters of the bridge using the reticle. This is very important! By default, some of the sliders in the Detail Tab will be adjusted to a nominal setting. Set the Sharpening to 25 and the others to 0.



Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 079

You want to deal with any "Chroma noise" first. Chroma noise looks like scattered individually-colored pixels. It usually shows up in deep shadow areas. Sometimes it can be hard to spot. There is Chroma noise in the shadowed areas of the rafters (Reference 079). If you can't see it in the book, [click on this link and go look at the photograph on Flickr](#). The arrow points to some Chroma noise.



Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 080

While watching the Chroma noise in the Preview Window, slowly increase the color slider. I like to use the keyboard up and down arrow method. (If you missed that, [go back and read the Photoshop section using this link.](#)) Or, in Lightroom, you can highlight a slider by clicking on the name of the slider (for example, "Color") and then increase or decrease the setting using the + and – keys on your keyboard. As you begin to increase the Color slider, the Detail and Smoothness sliders will

default to 50. I've always left them there. They seem to have very little effect anyway. I chose a setting of 40 for the Color slider. It was at that point that the Chroma noise disappeared from the rafters. If you watch the bride as you make this adjustment, you'll notice there is no affect to her. That's because this setting only affects Chroma noise. However, her skin does exhibit "Luminance noise," and we're going to address that next.

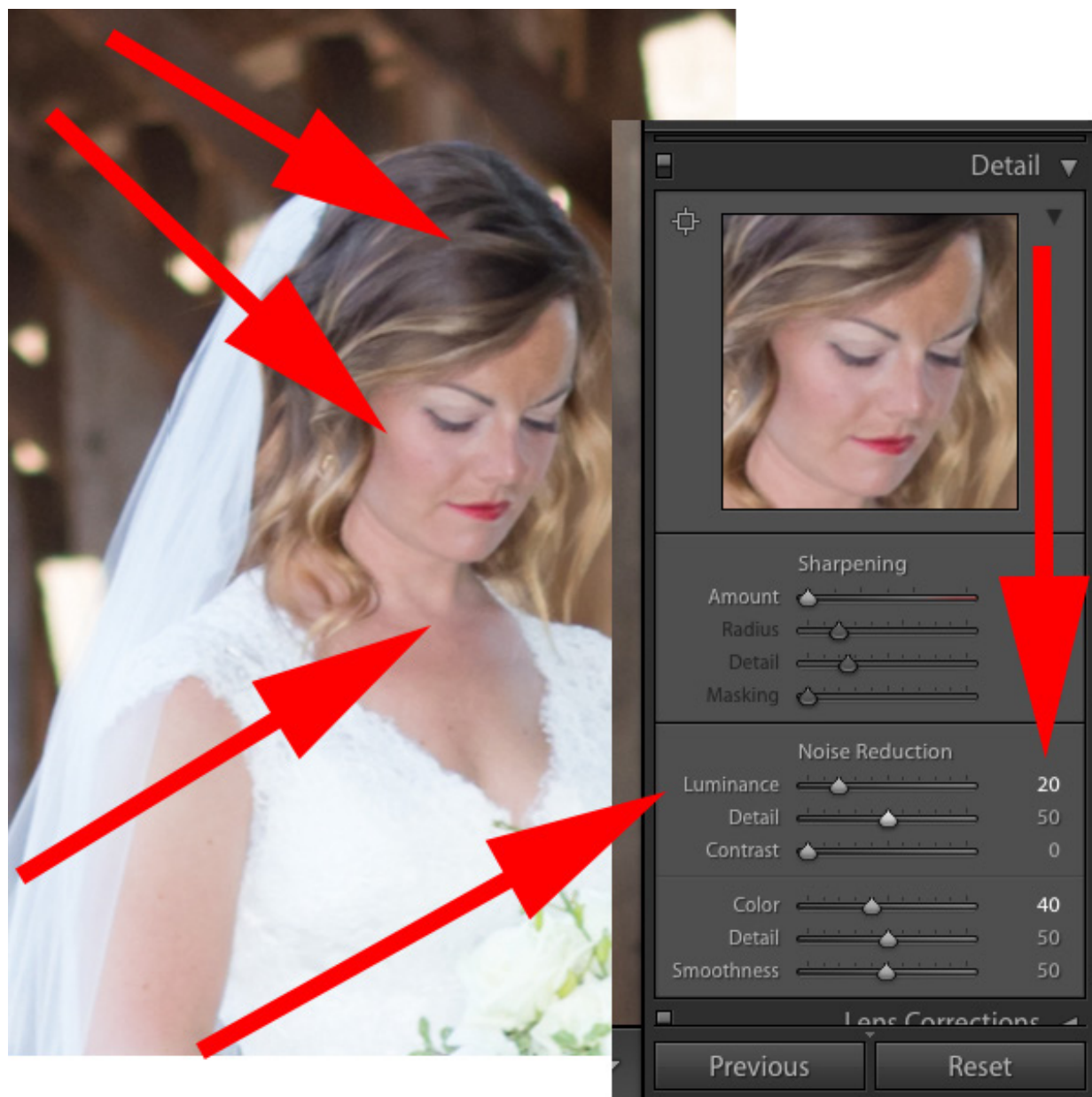


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 081

In Reference 081, you can see that I repositioned the bride into the smaller preview window using the reticle. As you begin to increase the Luminance slider, the Detail and Contrast sliders will become active. The Detail slider defaults at 50, and the Contrast slider defaults to 0. I find these two adjustments to be inconsequential, and I rarely move them. The red arrows on the bride indicate where I see Luminance noise on her skin and in her hair. Again, I used the keyboard and arrow method to gradually increase the Luminance slider until I saw the noise disappear. My setting ended up being 20.

After fixing the Luminance noise, return the Sharpening slider to 0. We will address sharpening later in the Fundamental Edits List.

Steps Four, Five, and 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 using this link](#).

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

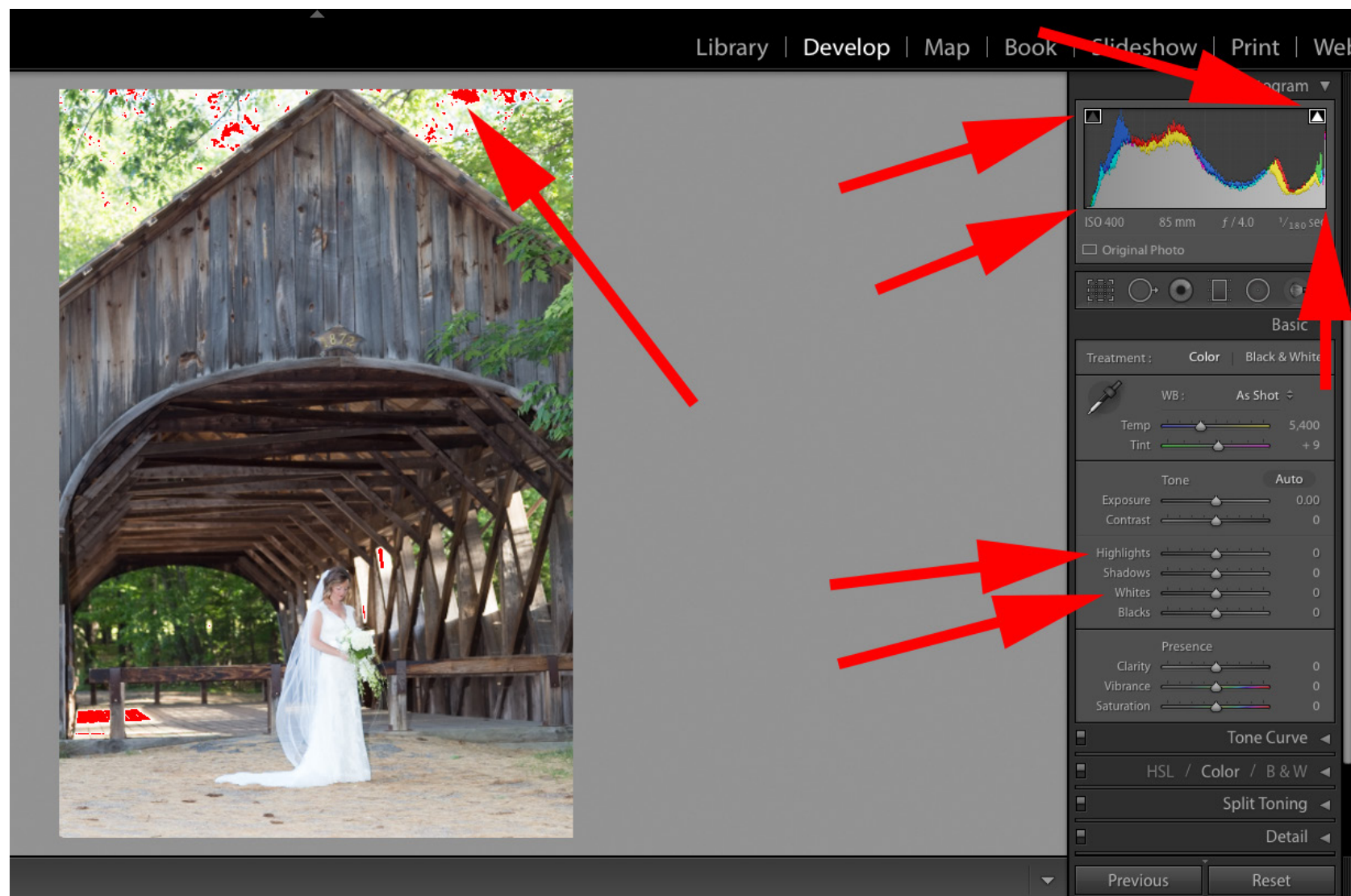


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 082

The first thing you will notice in Reference 082 is that I have put the Preview back to "Fill." For this step, I want to see the entire image. In any exposure adjustment, but in particular a global adjustment, the first step is to evaluate the histogram.

I always begin by making sure 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 is occurring, it will show up as a mask on the preview. As you can see, there is highlight clipping in the sky and in the background.

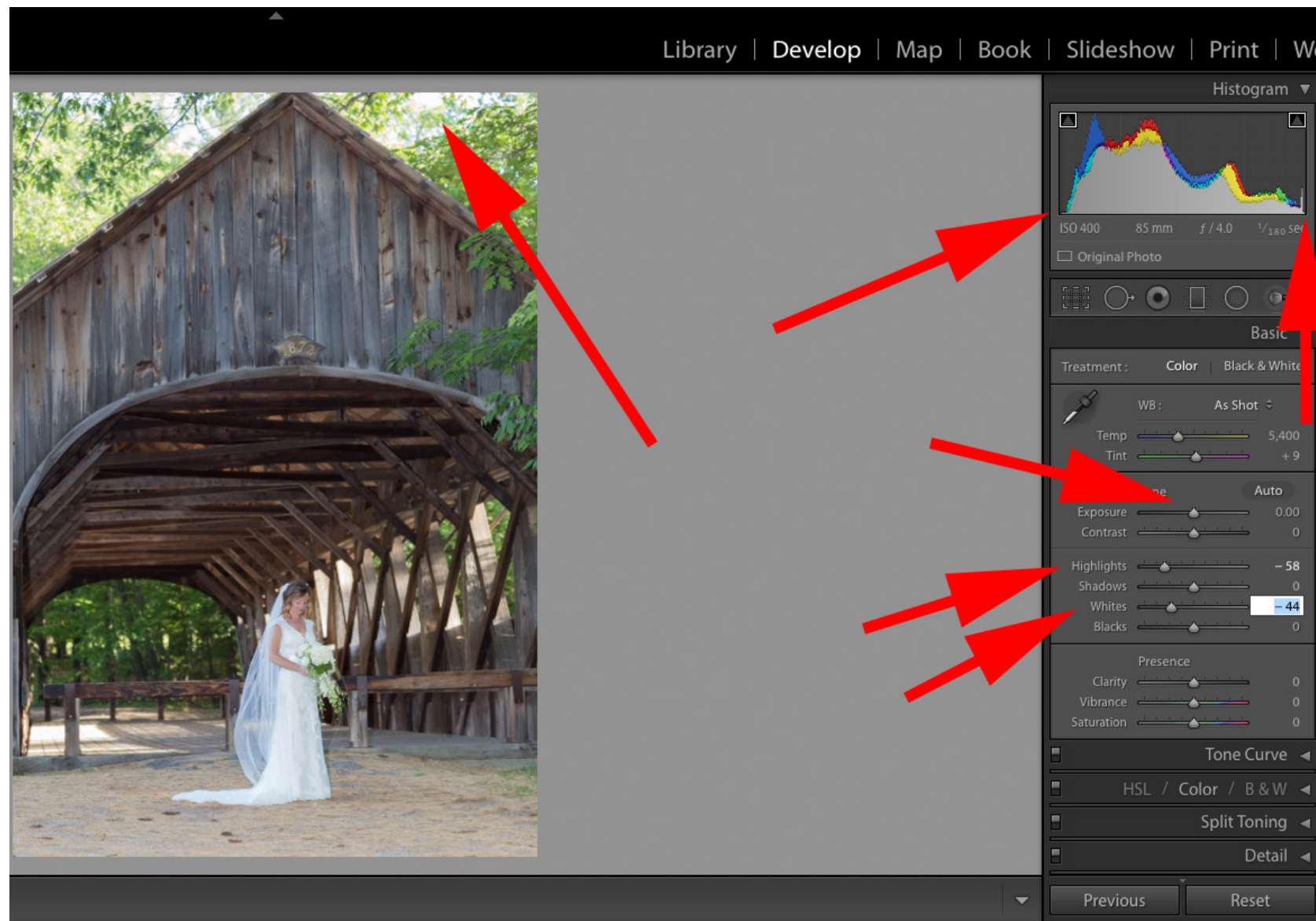


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 083

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

Let's move our eyes down to the "Fundamental" tab. The next few steps in the Fundamental Edits List are going to occur here.

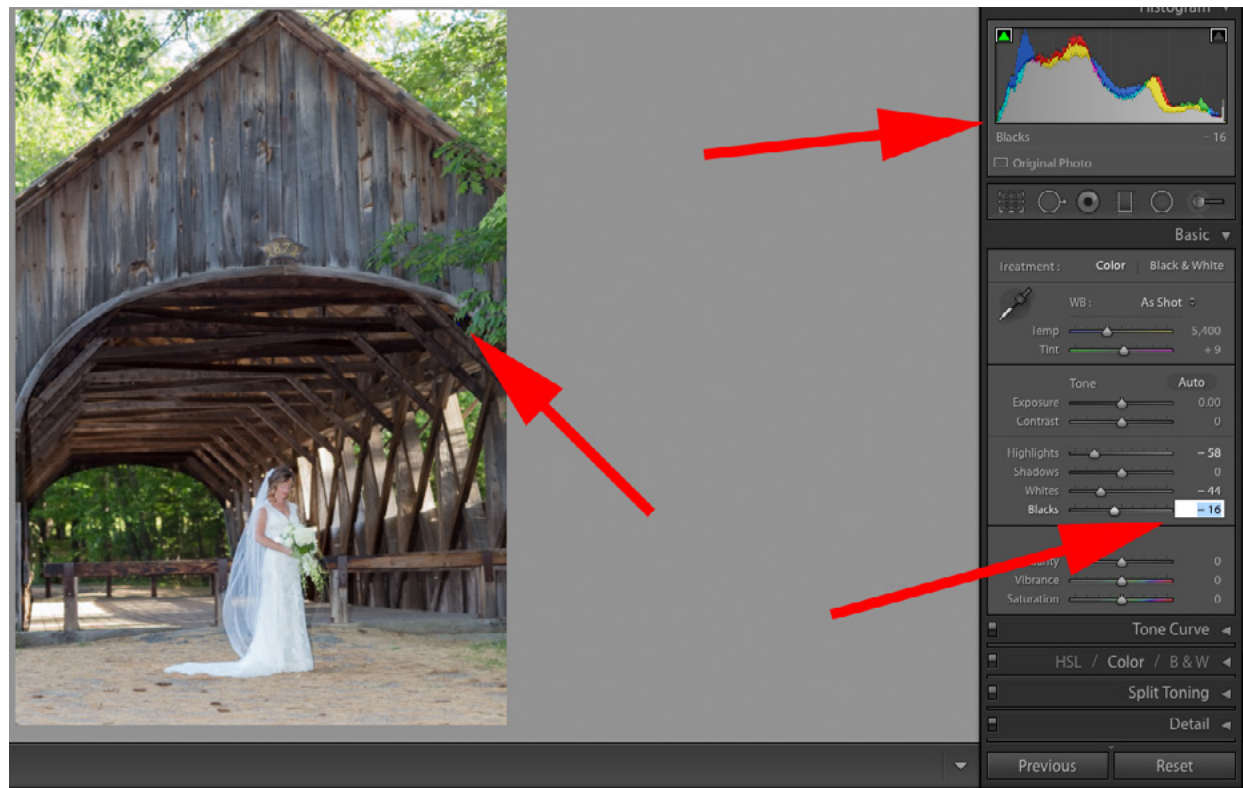


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 084

When new photographers begin post-production editing and they 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. About the only time I use the Exposure slider is when the exposure of the image 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 exactly what those terms mean and how they’re going to affect the image, [go back and read the Photoshop section using this link.](#)

In Reference 083, you will notice that all of my exposure issues were in the highlight end of the scale. I was able to bring my histogram under control and reduce the clipping to just a tiny bit. I always leave just a tiny bit of clipping on both ends. If you don’t know why, read the Photoshop section; it is called Setting

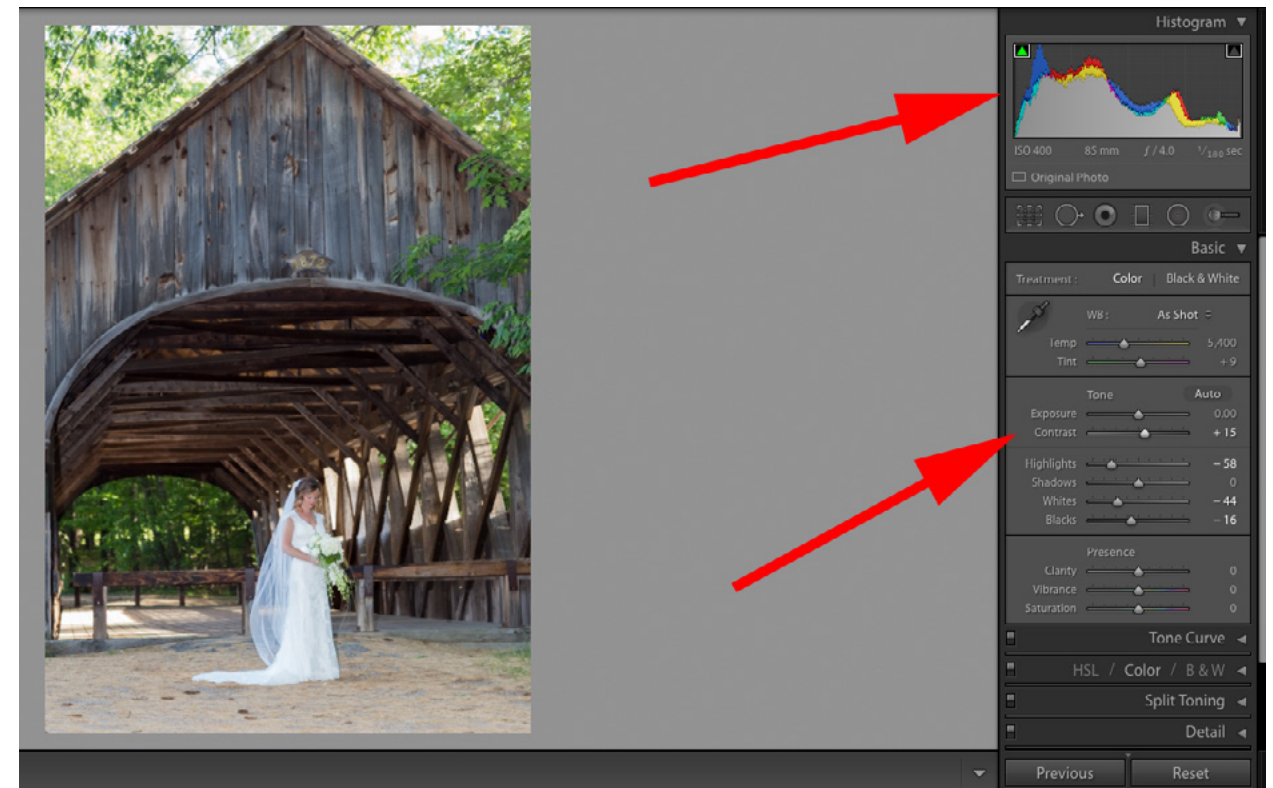


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 085

the White Point and Setting the Black Point.

In Reference 084, I have set the Black Point by reducing the “Blacks” slider until the Shadow Clipping Indicator is just beginning to light up (where the red arrow is pointing at the bridge).

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 for evaluating Contrast. Monitor calibration is a helpful tool. Outside of that, it is a combination of what your eyes see and what the histogram is telling you.

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



Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 086

Steps Seven and Eight – Color Temperature and Color Tint

When evaluating the “Temp” and “Tint,” it is a process of using the histogram, the slider settings, and your eyes. Look at Reference 086. Notice that we are now looking that the toolbox above the one that we were using for the Global Exposure Adjustment.

At the top, 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.

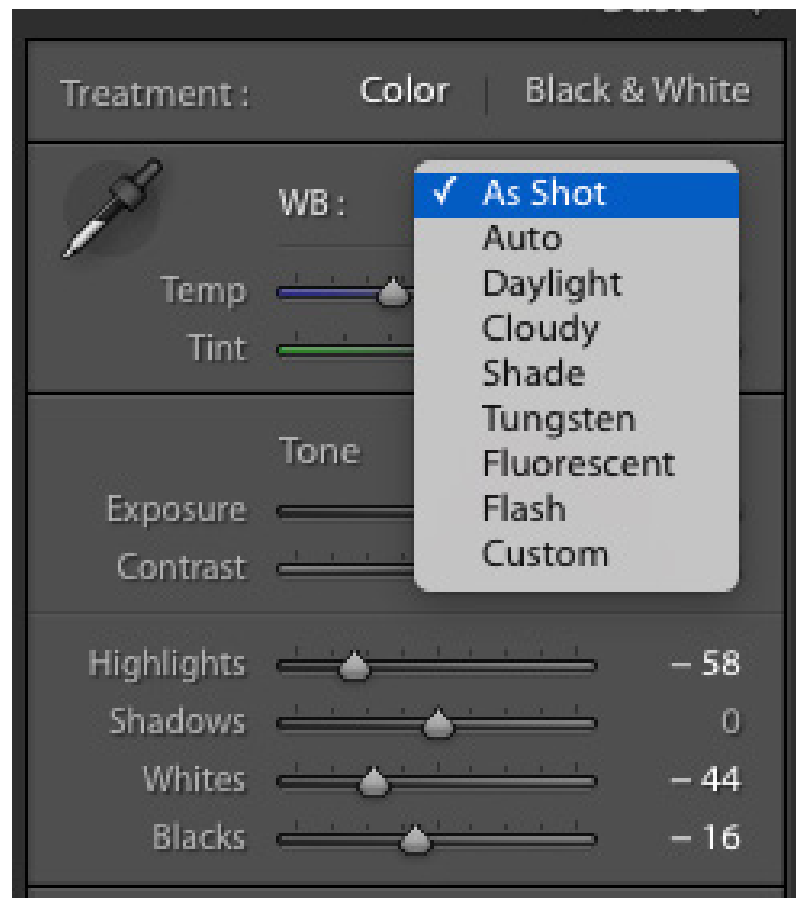


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 087

Recommended Reading: Photzy published a guide specific to black and white conversion called [Better Black and White](#). If you love creating black and white images, I would definitely consider picking that up.

Below the Treatment line you will see an “Eyedropper,” “WB,” and (in this case) “As Shot.”

The Eyedropper will be our main tool for setting the Temp and Tint, but let’s talk about the WB. The WB stands for White Balance. The “As Shot” is where I have set the WB drop-down menu.

If you click on the “As Shot” icon, this menu will appear. I’m sure that you realize that this is much like the settings 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, and they will mess you up. The time to make those preset WB decisions is when you’re taking the photograph.

Go back to Reference 086.

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).

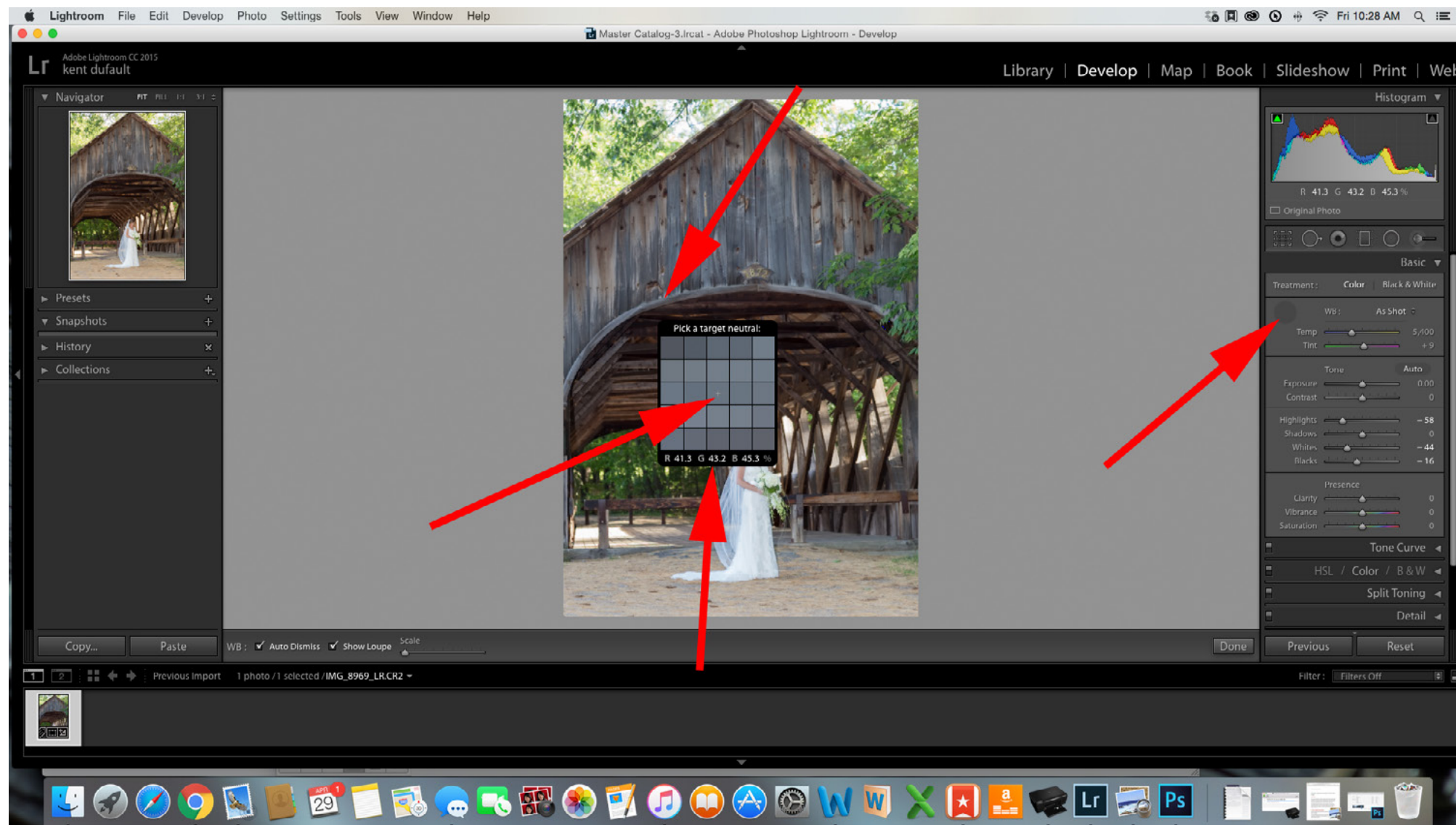


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 088

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

If your photograph has some color near a clean 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.

For our bridal portrait, we have a nice clean gray on the bridge. We also have some fairly clean highlights on the bride's dress. In the Photoshop section, we looked at making our selection from various points within the scene. Some worked better than others. So, [go back and read that section using this link](#) if you missed it.

If possible, always make your selection from a clean 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 are to give you a visual reference as to whether another nearby point would be better. Another valuable tool that Lightroom provides here is the RGB readout at the bottom of the 25-chip box. The closer that these three numbers are in value, the cleaner your sample is.

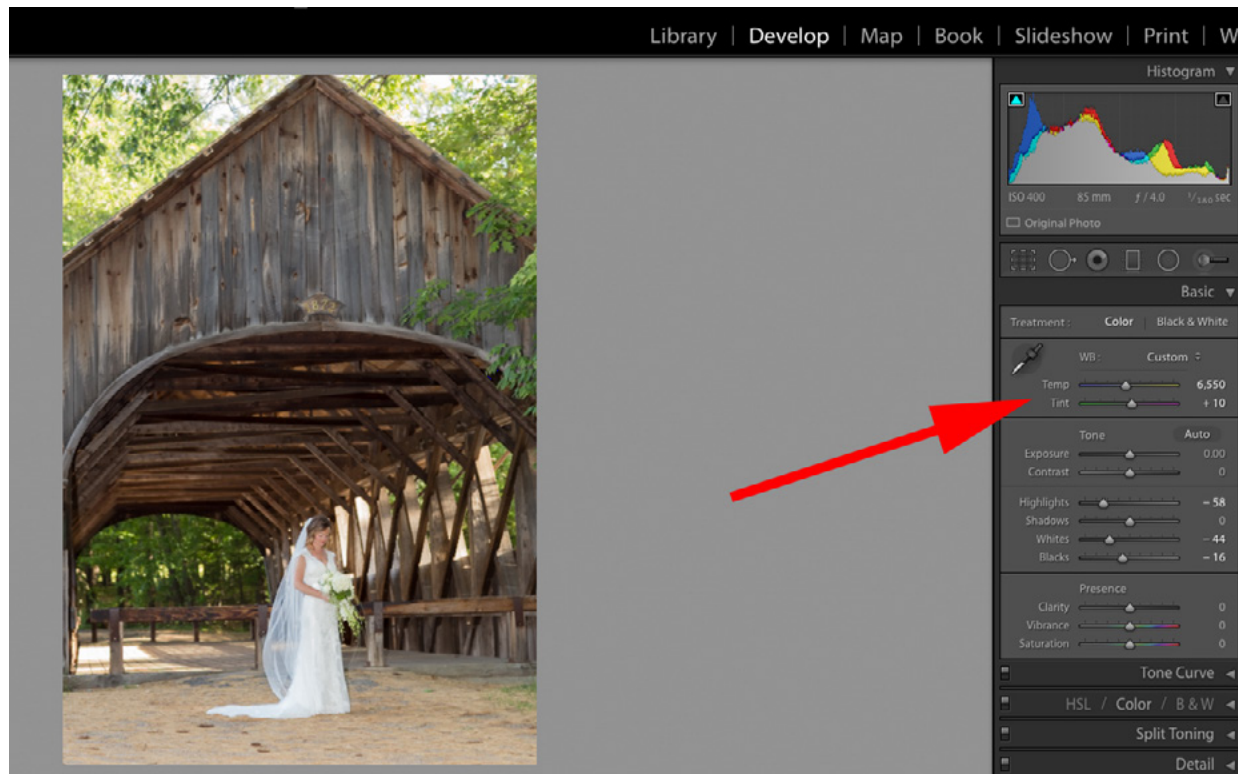


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 089

After clicking the Eyedropper on a nice clean area of gray, you can see (visually) how the image has been warmed up. Look at the Temp and Tint sliders in Reference 089. They've both moved to the right. If you go back and look at this adjustment in the Photoshop section, the numbers are almost exactly the same. Finally, look at the histogram. The elevation of "Blue" has dropped, and the "Red" and "Yellow" have slightly increased.

The image is looking 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 must select “Import” under the “Library” menu.
2. True or False: The “Import” button is located on 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. The “Exposure” adjustment tools are found under which tab?
8. True or False: When setting the contrast, the Eyedropper will give you an exact reading.
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?



Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 090

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 using this link](#).

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

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

Previously, I gave you two methods to increase an adjustment slider “in steps” rather than just grabbing the handle and moving it. The first method involved 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 to highlight the box where the adjustment numbers appear and use 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, the Preview picture, and the 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 090, the shadow Clipping Indicators really popped up at +51.



Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 091

Using the “down” arrow key, I backed down on the Clarity setting until all the Clipping Indicators disappeared, with the exception of the small area that I chose to leave earlier (indicated by the left-pointing arrow).

My final Clarity setting ended up being +20.

Key Lesson: I hope you’re beginning to realize why it is so important to do any sharpening last on the Fundamental Edits List. Some of our adjustments are adding the appearance of sharpening without adding noise. This will allow us to use a lower sharpening setting in the end. That lowers the possibility of noise and artifacts.

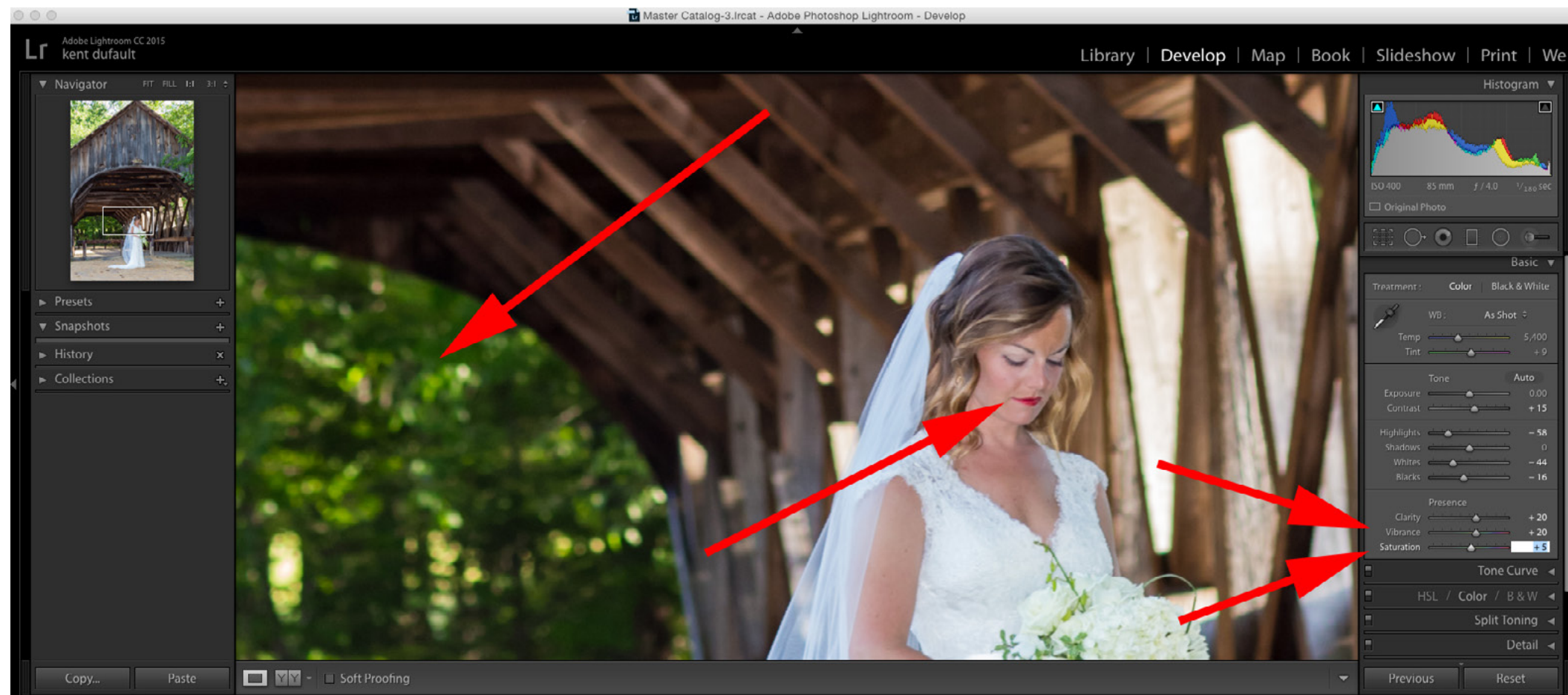


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 092

Steps Ten and Eleven – Vibrancy and Saturation

If you skipped it, go back and read the Photoshop section. I put a lot of information on the “what” and “why” in that section. [Use this link to go back to that section.](#)

Here are several important points regarding Vibrance and Saturation:

Always adjust the Vibrance first and then the Saturation.

When adjusting the Saturation, watch for an increase in Clipping.

When adjusting Saturation, I find it works best to zoom in to a 100% view, and then visually check the areas that you’re trying to affect as you move the slider. This way you can avoid an over-saturated look and artifacts.

Again, use your keyboard keys for an incremental adjustment.

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

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

When adjusting the saturation for this bridal portrait, I had two concerns: the trees in the background and the bride’s ruby red lips.

I zoomed my Preview window to 100%. I set 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. At this setting, the trees were no problem.

Note: I added some interesting “extra” information about adjusting Vibrance and Saturation in the Elements section. Make sure you read that entire section as well!

That concludes what we will accomplish from the Fundamental Edits List on the “Fundamental” tab. Now we will scroll down to the “Effects” tab and click the triangle to open it up.

Step Twelve – Efix: Vignette

If you have strong feelings about the use of a vignette, go back and read my explanation in the Photoshop section as to why it is on my Fundamental Edits List. I also gave detailed steps on setting up the vignette in the Photoshop section. I think the setting up aspect is very important. I’m not going to repeat it here in the Lightroom section because it works exactly the same way. [Use this link to go back to that section.](#)

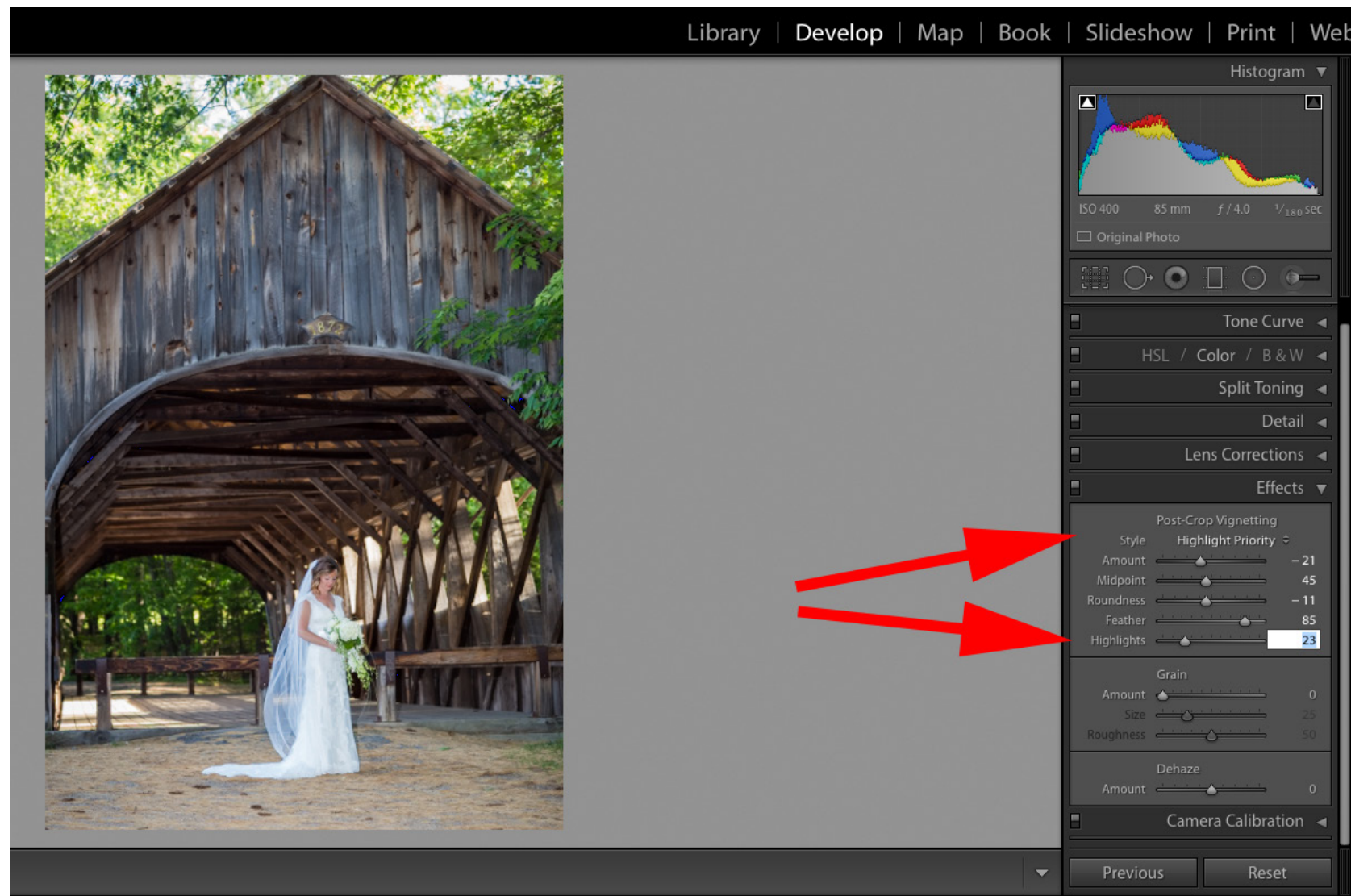


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 093

Reference 093 indicates my settings for the vignette. (Again, make sure you read the “how” and “why” in the Photoshop section.)

Step Thirteen – Efix: Dehaze

Staying in the “Effects” tab, skip past the section titled “Grain” and look at the “Dehaze” slider. The Dehaze function is included in my Fundamental Edits List because under certain circumstances, it works wonders. Our bridal portrait, however, doesn’t require any adjustment to this setting. Go back and read Step Thirteen of the Photoshop section for more detailed information on Dehaze and what it can do for you.

Step Fourteen – Localized Adjustments with the Adjustment Brush

There is a lot of information on this step in the Photoshop section, including some other recommended reading and viewing. Please make sure that you check that out. Essentially, here in the Lightroom section, I’m just going to cover the differences in how the controls are set up.

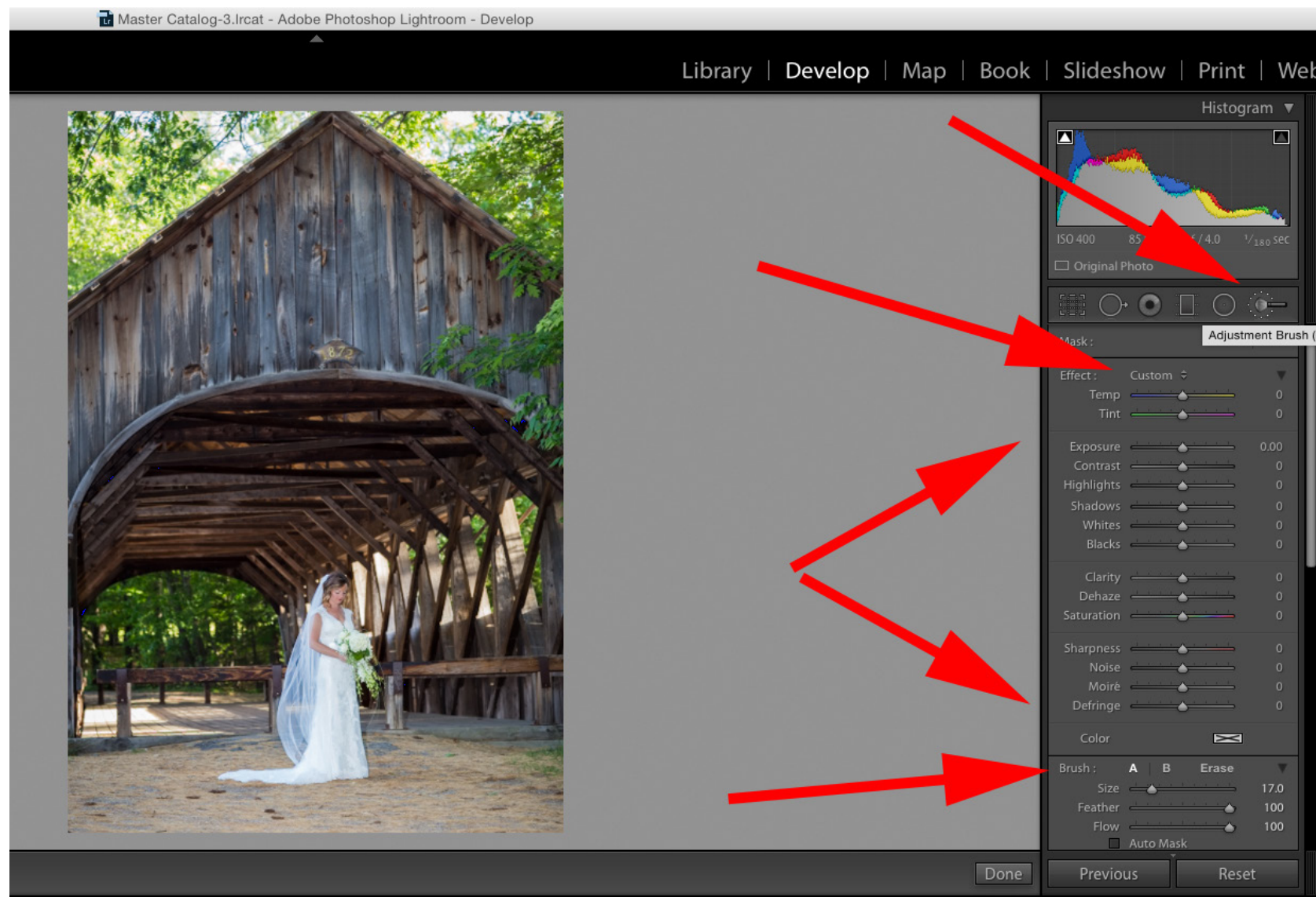


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 094

Reference 094 shows us the set-up for using the Adjustment Brush in Lightroom. The top arrow points to the Adjustment Brush icon located in the toolbar below the histogram. When you select that, the Adjustment Brush settings appear below. The slider adjustments operate just the same as was discussed in the Photoshop section, with a few differences.

Let's talk about the "Effect" drop-down menu located at the top of the box. This menu operates like a set of "Presets" to achieve a certain function by letting the software choose the starting point.

I do not like the use of presets in this setting. I don't like letting software make decisions for me, even if you're just using it as a starting point! Your Fundamental edits should always be based on the histogram, the RGB numbers, and your Preview window. That's my opinion. If you follow that recommendation, the Effect drop-down menu will always be set to "Custom."



Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 095

Reference 095 shows you just one of the reasons why I don't use presets in the Fundamental Edits List. The left image shows the mask; the middle image shows my custom settings; the right image shows what the preset "skin softening" did to our bride. It looks awful! If you can't really see it well in this book, [click this link to view it large on Flickr](#).

The two angled arrows in Reference 094 (pointing up and down with their end points almost touching) point to the adjustments that you can accomplish with the Adjustment Brush. These are exactly the same as in the Photoshop section.

The bottom section is the "Brush" section. This is quite different from Photoshop. The size, feather, and flow options are pretty standard. "A" and "B" are two different brushes that you can

preset; this allows you to quickly switch back and forth between two brushes. That's very useful. Now remember, when talking about the "brush" you're talking about what is going to be used to paint that mask. The slider settings then affect the area within that mask.

If you wish to remove part of the mask, you must click on the "Erase" button.

"Auto Mask," which is located at the bottom of the window, limits the painting to just the crosshairs of the cursor. The plus side to using Auto Mask is that you can really paint a detailed mask. The downside is that it takes forever to paint a mask of any real size. I typically leave this turned off unless I'm trying to paint along a fine edge or into a tight space.

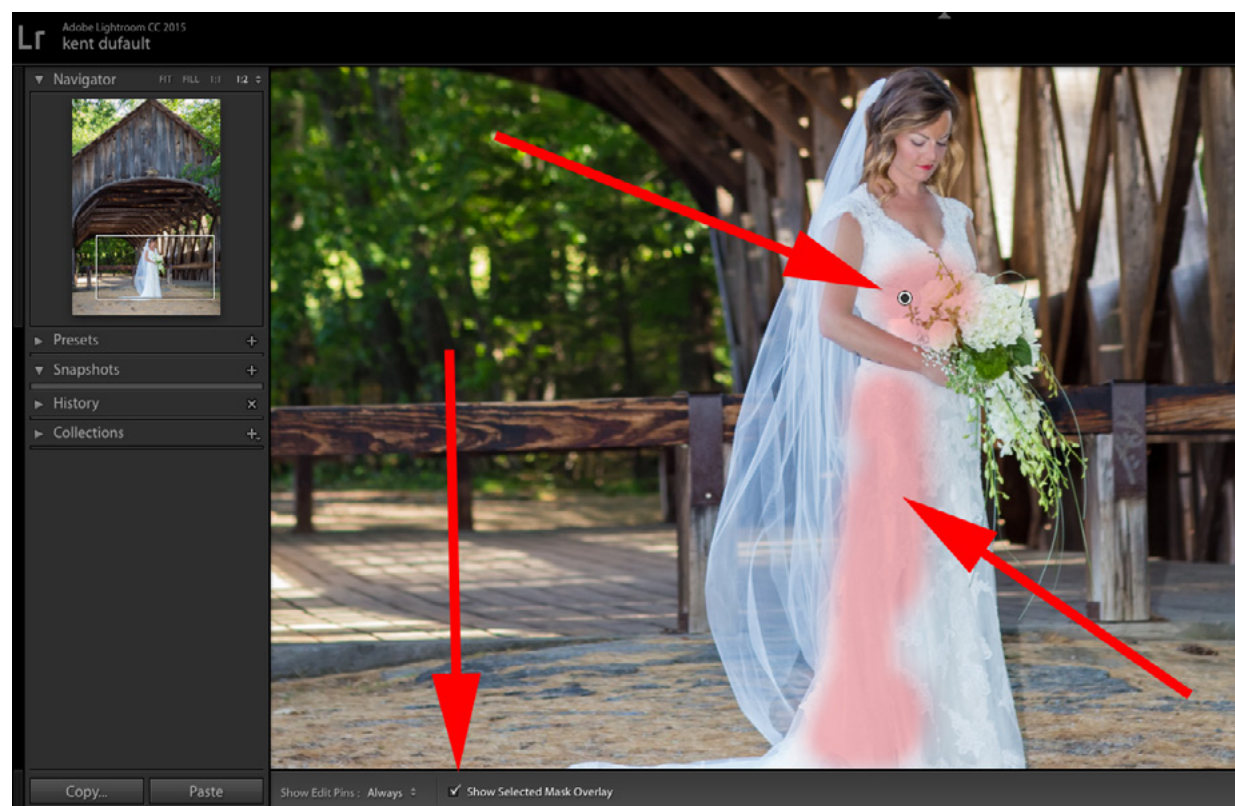


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 096

Reference 096 also shows a few small differences when using the Adjustment Brush in Lightroom versus Photoshop.

The active mask has a pin with a black center (instead of a green pin as in Photoshop).

The "Show Mask" option is at the bottom of the Preview Window instead of in the toolbox.

You can turn the mask on and off by simply clicking the "o" key.

Step Fifteen – Sharpening

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

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

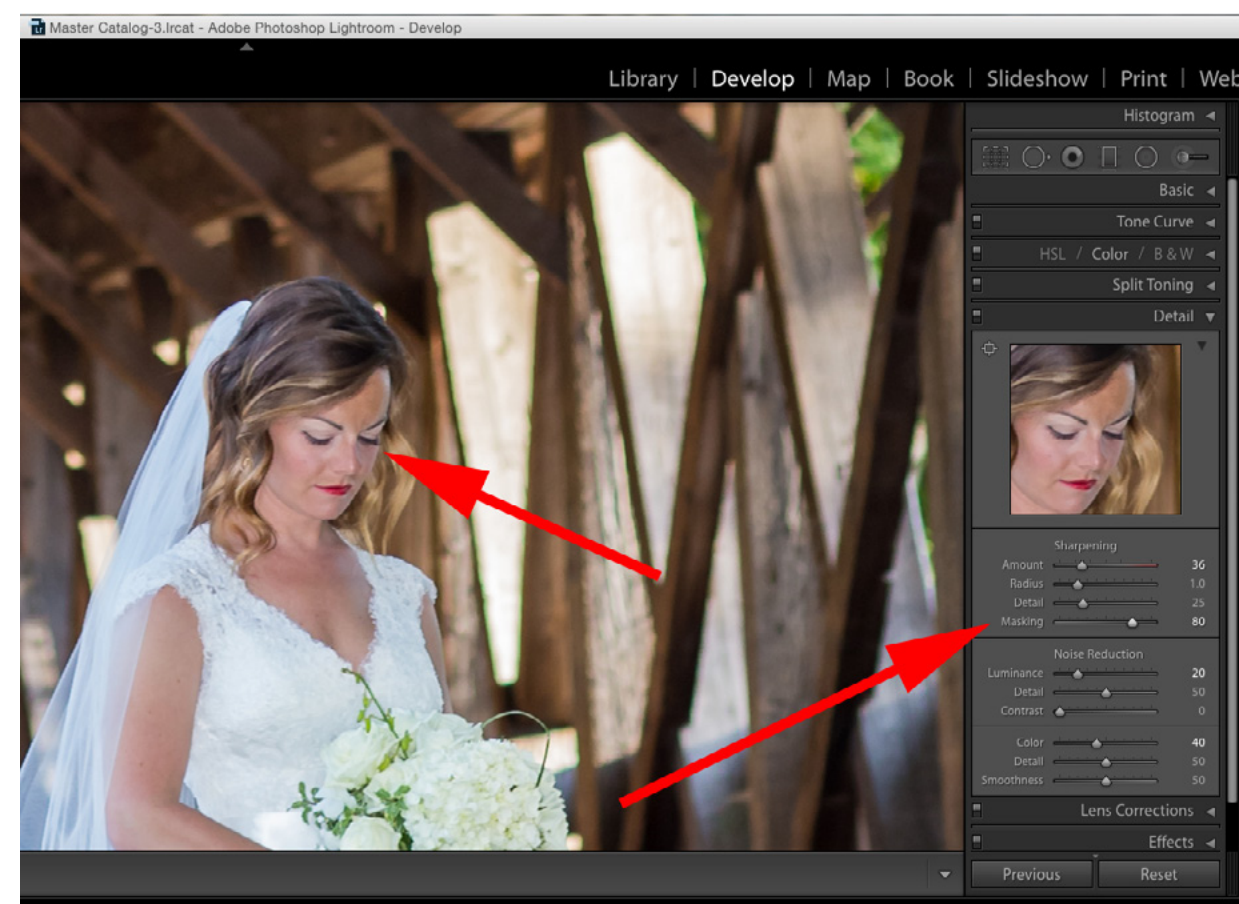


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 097

Outside of all the important information that you'll read about sharpening in the Photoshop section, there are five points that I really want to hammer home.

You should do the global sharpening last.

You should do localized sharpening of the subject during the Adjustment Brush step before doing the globalized sharpening.

Your Preview window should always be at 100% (1:1) when evaluating your sharpening settings.

Always use the least amount of global sharpening that you can. My settings are almost always between 20 and 40 on the "Amount" slider.

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

THAT IS THE COMPLETION OF THE Fundamental EDITS LIST IN LIGHTROOM!

So, at the end of the Photoshop section, I dropped a couple of extra pointers for 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.

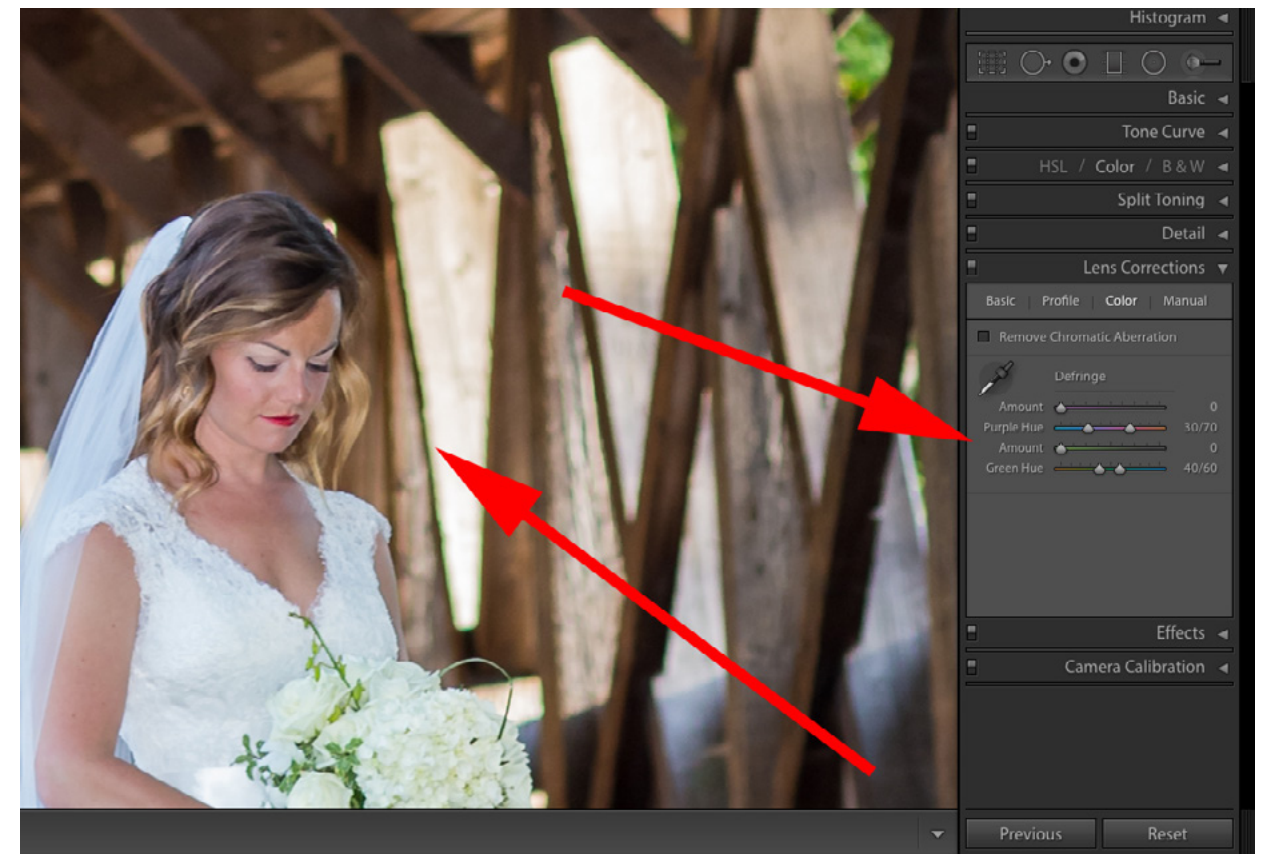


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 098

Fringe will be a purple or green color that shows up along edges of high contrast. The arrow pointing left (in Reference 098) indicates a green fringe along the upright struts of the bridge. To correct for this, open the "Lens Corrections" tab and select the "Color" tab. The right pointing arrow indicates the toolbox that you will now see.

If you 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 work with the "Eyedropper" tool.

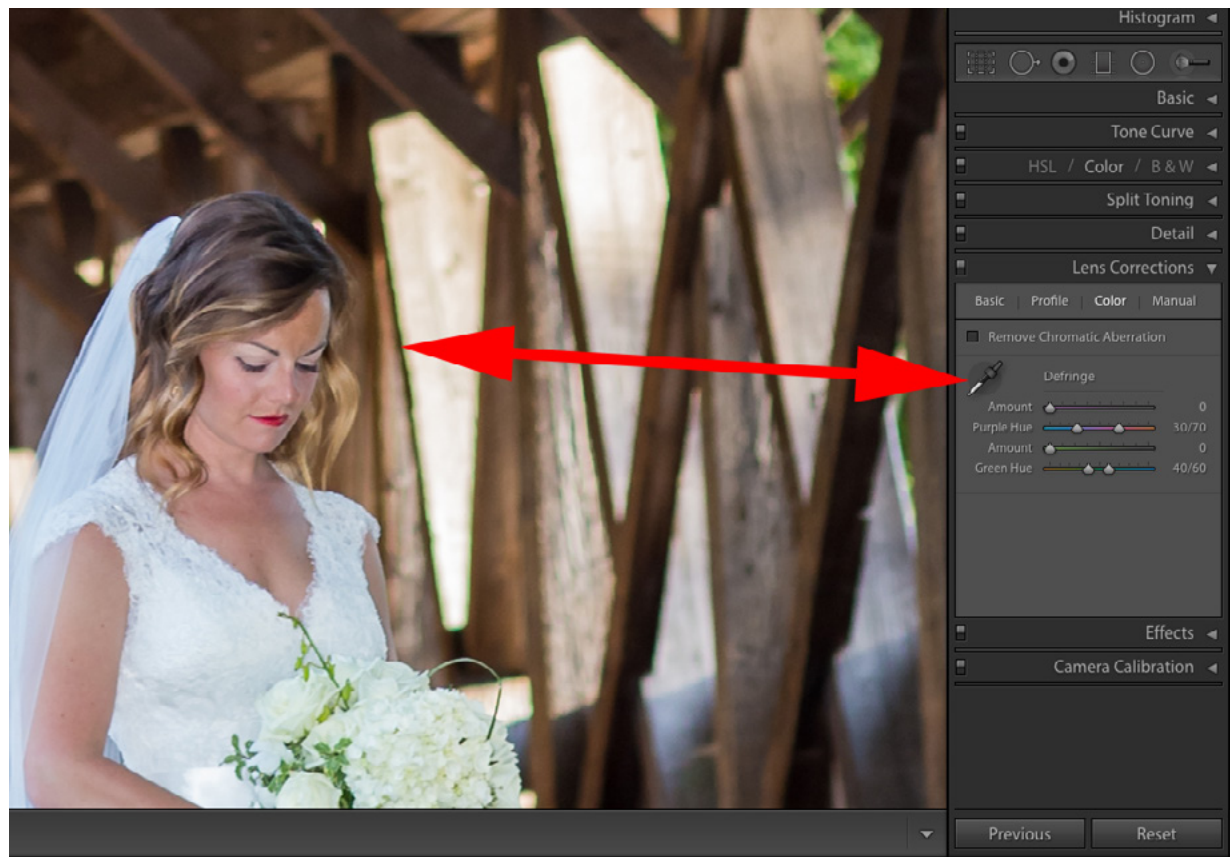


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 099

In Reference 099, you will see where we select the Eyedropper tool and left click it on the green fringe behind the bride.

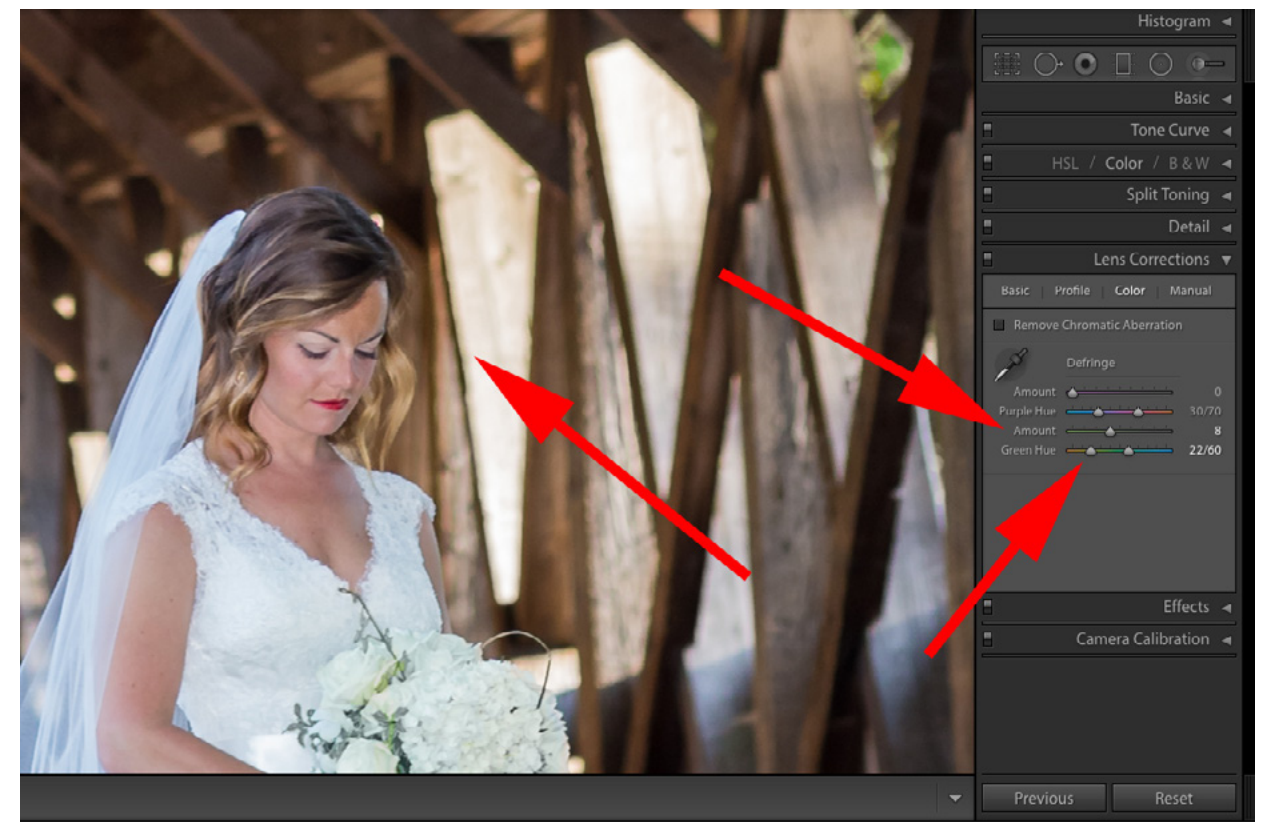


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 100

In Reference 100, you can see that the green fringe in the area that we clicked has disappeared, and the "Amount" and "Green Hue" sliders have adjusted.

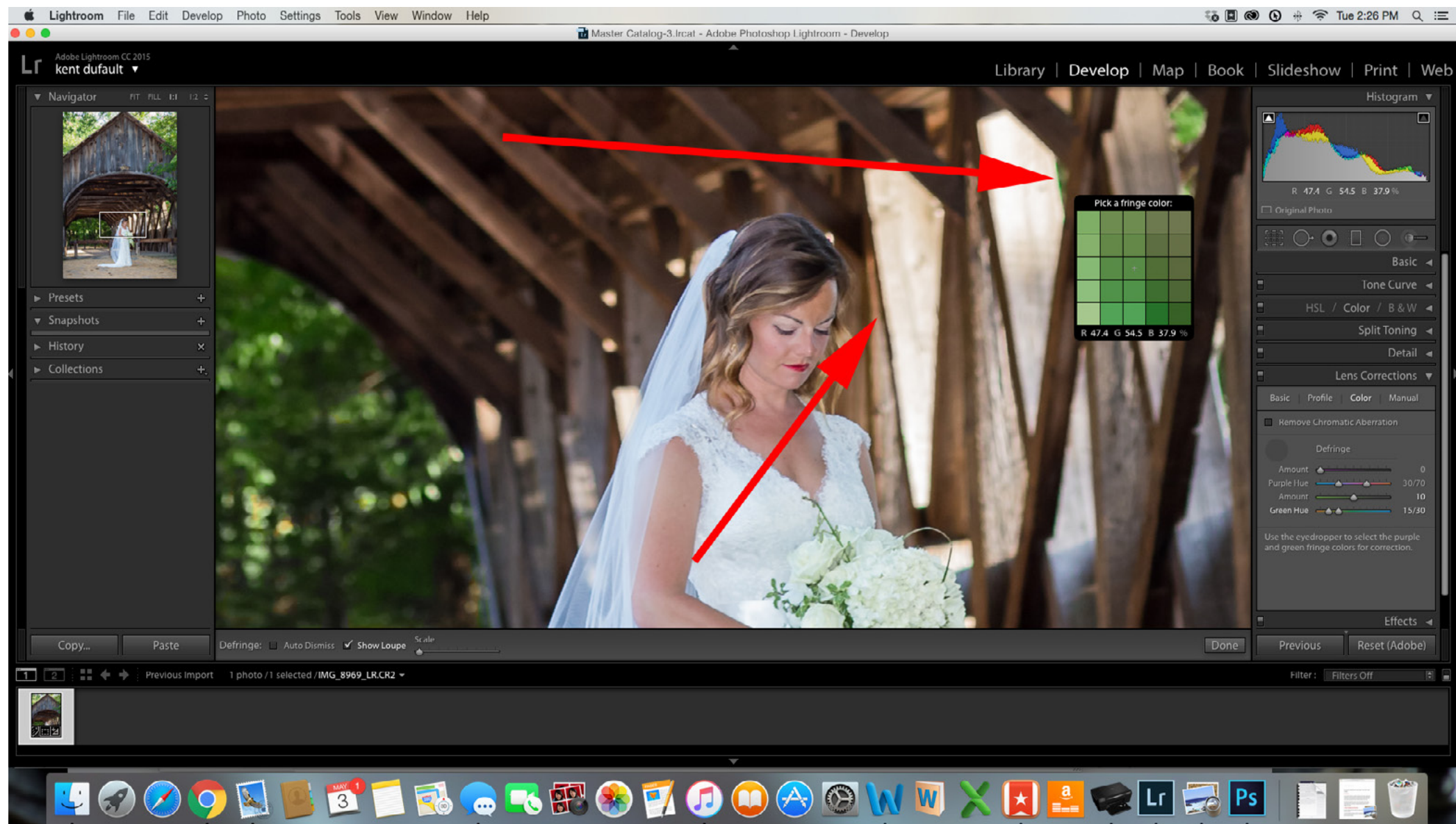


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 101

In Reference 101, you can see that there is additional green fringe, which the initial adjustment didn't get rid of.

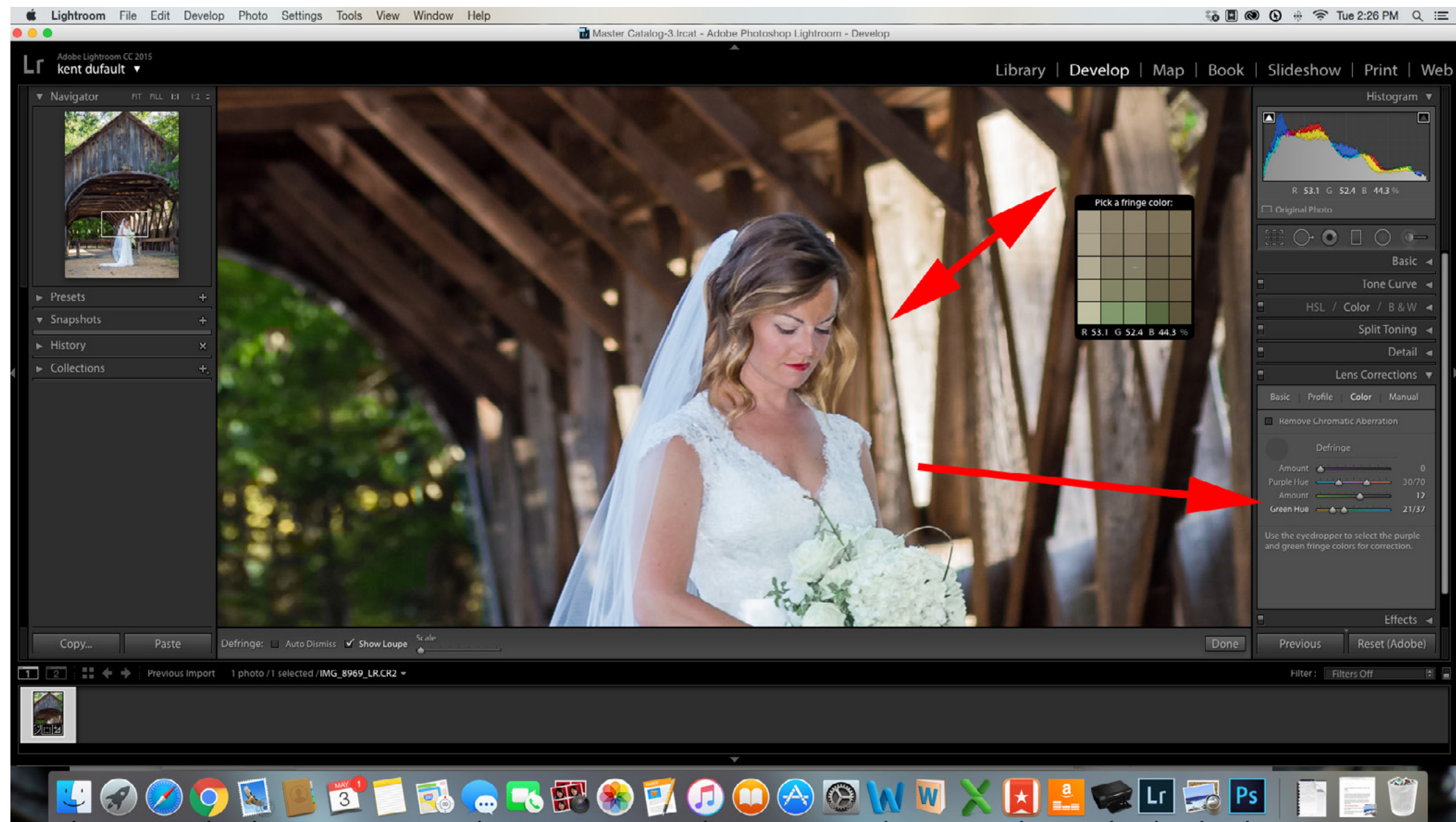


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 102

In Reference 102, you can see where we clicked on the second area of green fringe with the Eyedropper. The software calculated the best adjustment to eliminate the fringe in both areas and made an adjustment.

That extra tip takes care of the Chromatic Aberration called, Fringe!



Photograph by Kent DuFault - Image 102a

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

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

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 levels, it's very important to have your Preview window set at full frame.
5. True or False: The Vignette settings appear under the Details tab.
6. True or False: It is very important to Dehaze every image.
7. The Adjustment Brush toolbox allows you to set up _____ (number) brushes.
8. To turn the Adjustment Brush mask 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.

06

THE FUNDAMENTAL EDITS LIST USING ELEMENTS

You're probably getting sick of hearing this; however, I'm going to repeat it 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 isn't being repeated.

[Use this link to go back to the Photoshop section.](#)

[Use this link to go back to the Lightroom section.](#)

Step One – Opening the Image

Opening the image in Elements is simple; however, there are a few key components that you want to follow.

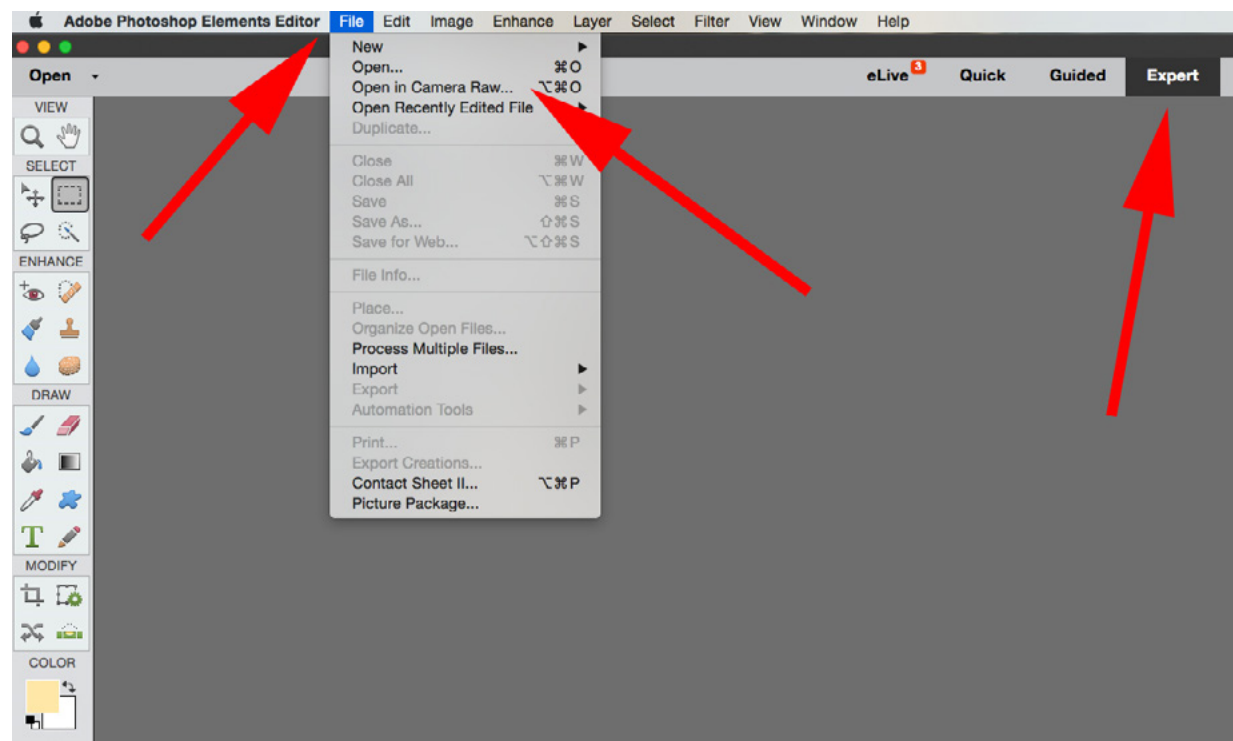


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 103

You want to be in the "Expert" mode.

Select "File" and then select "Open in Camera Raw."

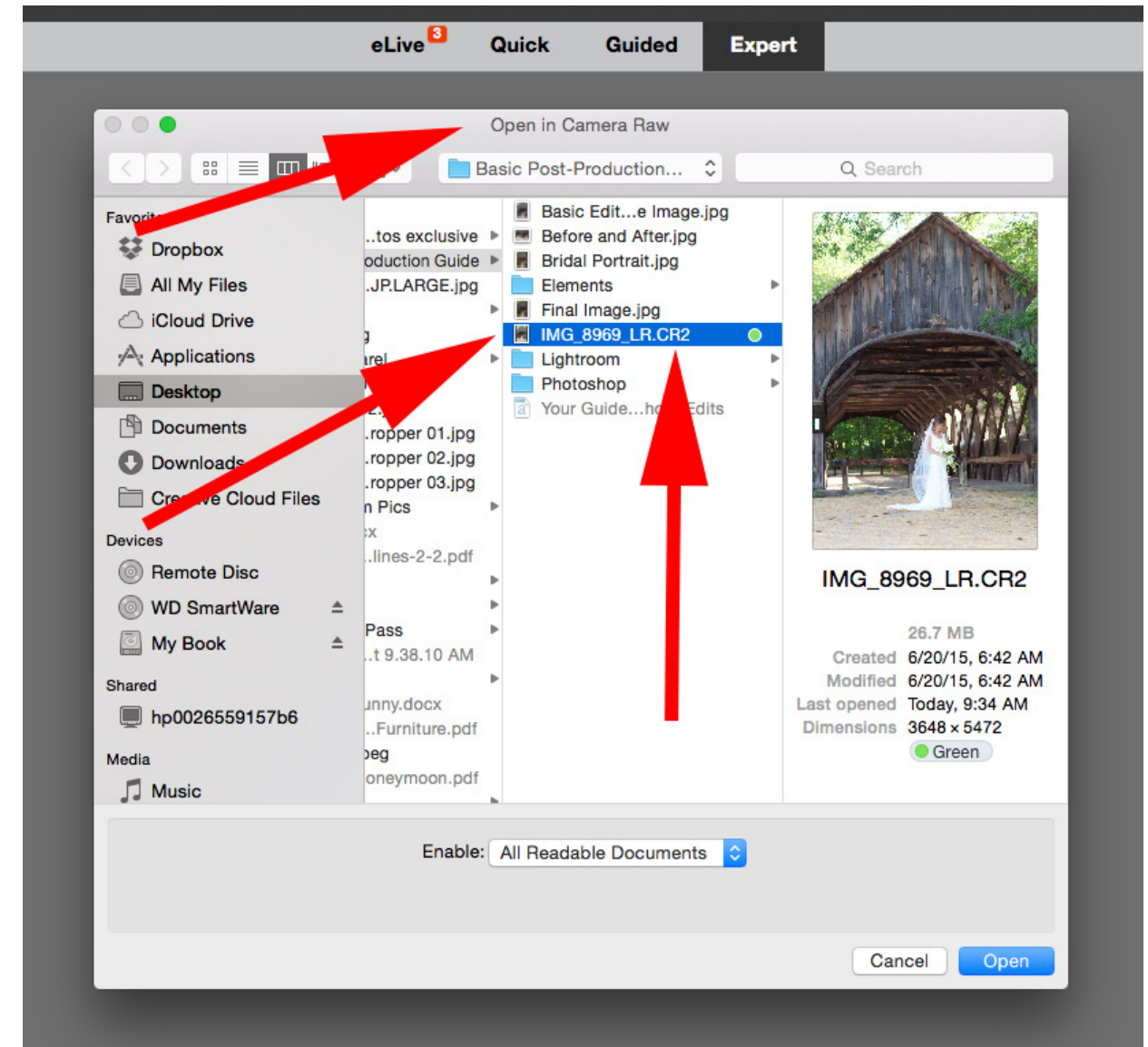


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 104

In Reference 104, you will see that the “Open in Camera Raw” dialog box has appeared. Navigate to your file. If possible, you 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 raw files, or raw and .jpeg combined, you can make it easier to locate your raw files. Go down to the drop-down menu 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 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” drop-down menu, only this time select “Open.”

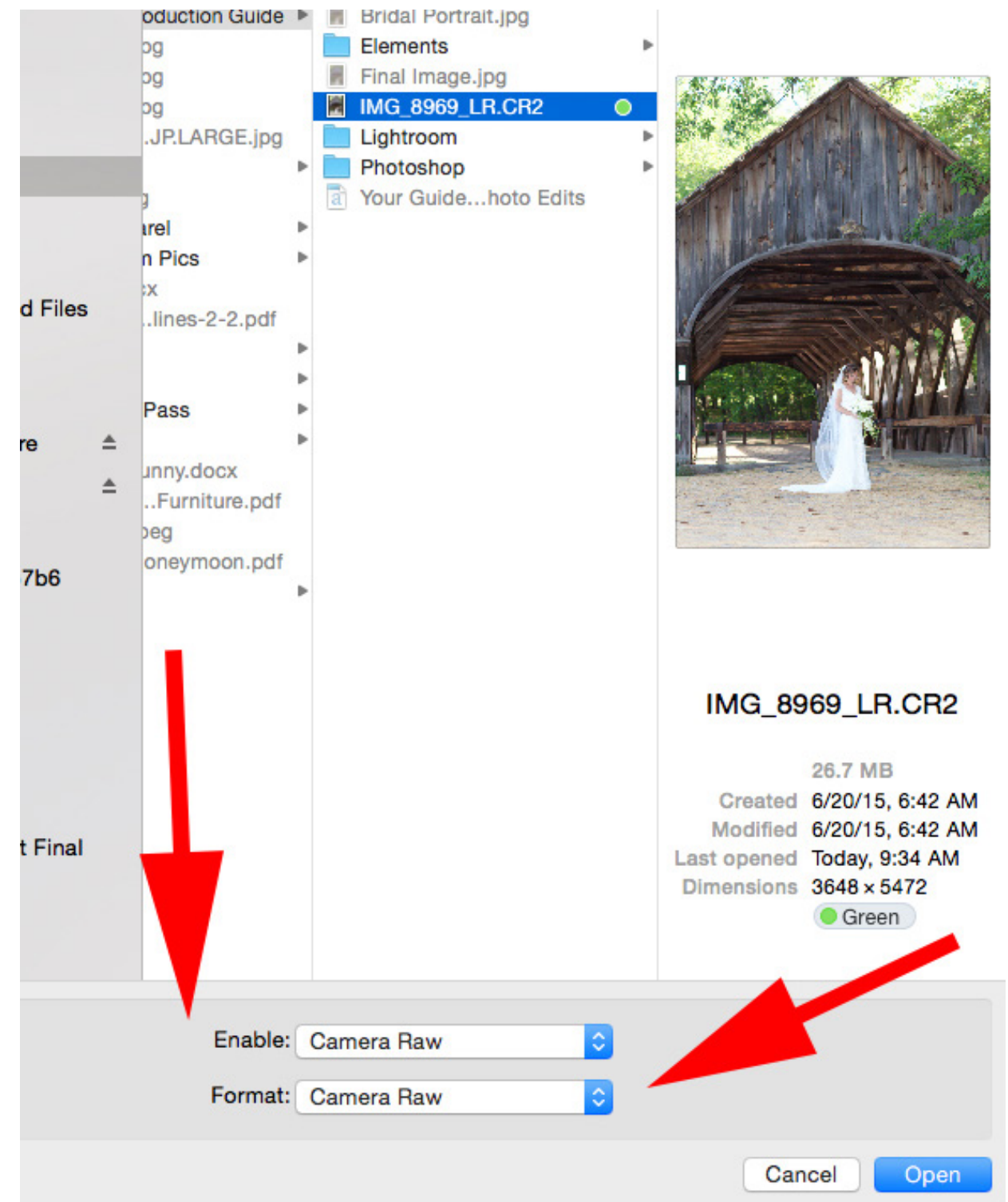


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 105

When the “Open” navigation box appears, navigate down to the “Enable” menu. Open it and click on “Camera Raw.” Now open the “Format” drop-down menu. Again, click on “Camera Raw.”

The problem with this method is that it always defaults back to its nominal settings, which means you have to do this every time. However, it’s helpful to know this; in case you’re already in this window looking for a file, and you decide that you wish to open the file in camera raw, you don’t have to close everything up and start over.

Step Two – Crop the Image

Just as in Photoshop, Elements users will complete most of their Fundamental Edits List within the Camera Raw Processing Window. Not all of the steps, however, will be done in the Camera Raw Processing Window, and 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 a few less tools to work with.

The “Crop” tool works just like Photoshop. ([Read the Photoshop section.](#))

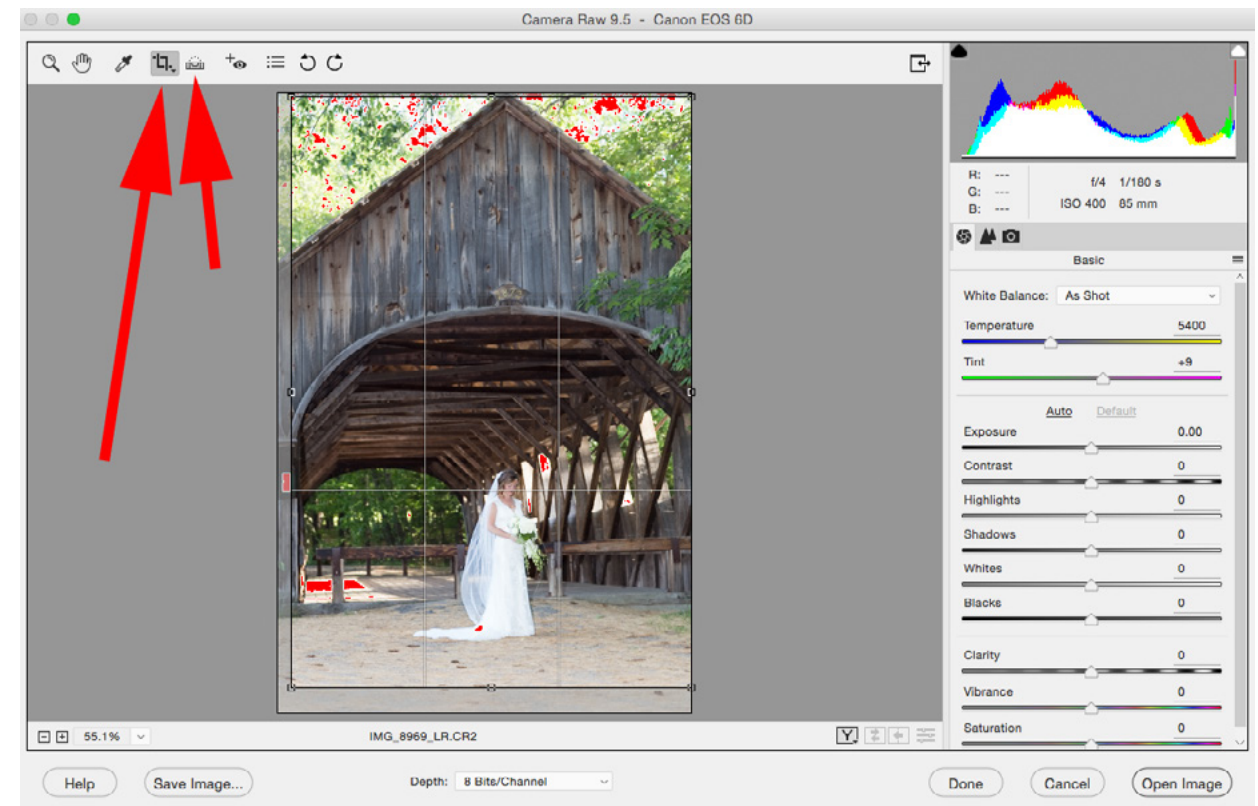


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 106

The left arrow in Reference 106 points to the Crop tool. We are going to crop this image just as we did in the Photoshop and Lightroom sections.

Additionally, I want to point out the little tool to the right of the Crop tool. This is the “Straighten” tool. I’m mentioning this here, in the Elements section, because many Elements users are new to editing.

The Straighten tool will also crop your image. Its primary function is to straighten a crooked horizon line. You can accomplish that same task in the Crop tool. It just automates the process and makes it a little easier with the “Straighten” tool.

Step Three – Noise Reduction

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

Reducing Chroma noise was discussed in the Lightroom section.

Review those sections if you skipped them.

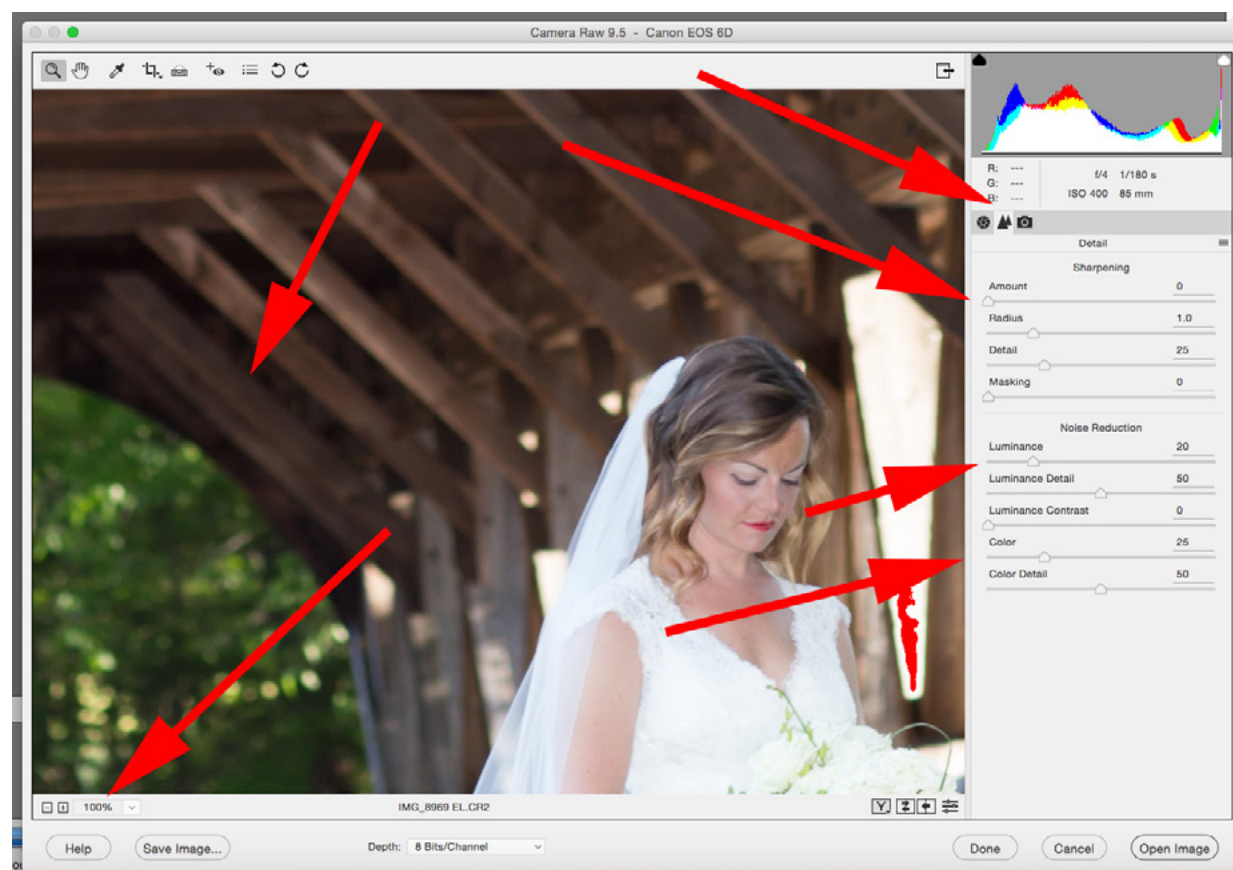


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 107

Review the following steps for Reference 107.

Set your Preview to 100%.

Navigate the Preview image to areas of visible noise, giving special attention to your main subject.

The Noise Reduction settings are located under the “Details” tab.

Make sure the “Sharpening” slider is set to 25.

Chromatic noise should be dealt with first. The “Color” and “Color Detail” sliders eliminate Chromatic noise. By default, they will open at 25 and 50. These settings eliminate most Chromatic noise. If you don’t see any Chromatic noise, then leave them there. If you still see Chromatic noise, then read the Lightroom section. If you don’t know what Chromatic noise is, then read the Photoshop section. The red arrow pointing at the bridge rafters indicates where there was some Chromatic noise present in this shot. The default settings eliminated it.

To eliminate Luminance noise, slowly raise the “Luminance” slider until the visible noise disappears. In the bridal portrait, I was looking at noise in the bride’s skin and hair. My luminance setting ended up at 20. The “Luminance Detail” slider defaults to 50 the minute you begin to raise the “Luminance” slider. Generally, leaving it at 50 works fine. The Luminance Detail slider doesn’t create much of an effect in many shots.

Return the “Sharpening” slider to 0, as we will address sharpening later in the Fundamental Edits List.

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

These steps in Elements work exactly like Photoshop. If you skipped the Photoshop section, go back and read it, as these very important steps are covered in detail there. [Use this link to go back to the Photoshop section.](#)

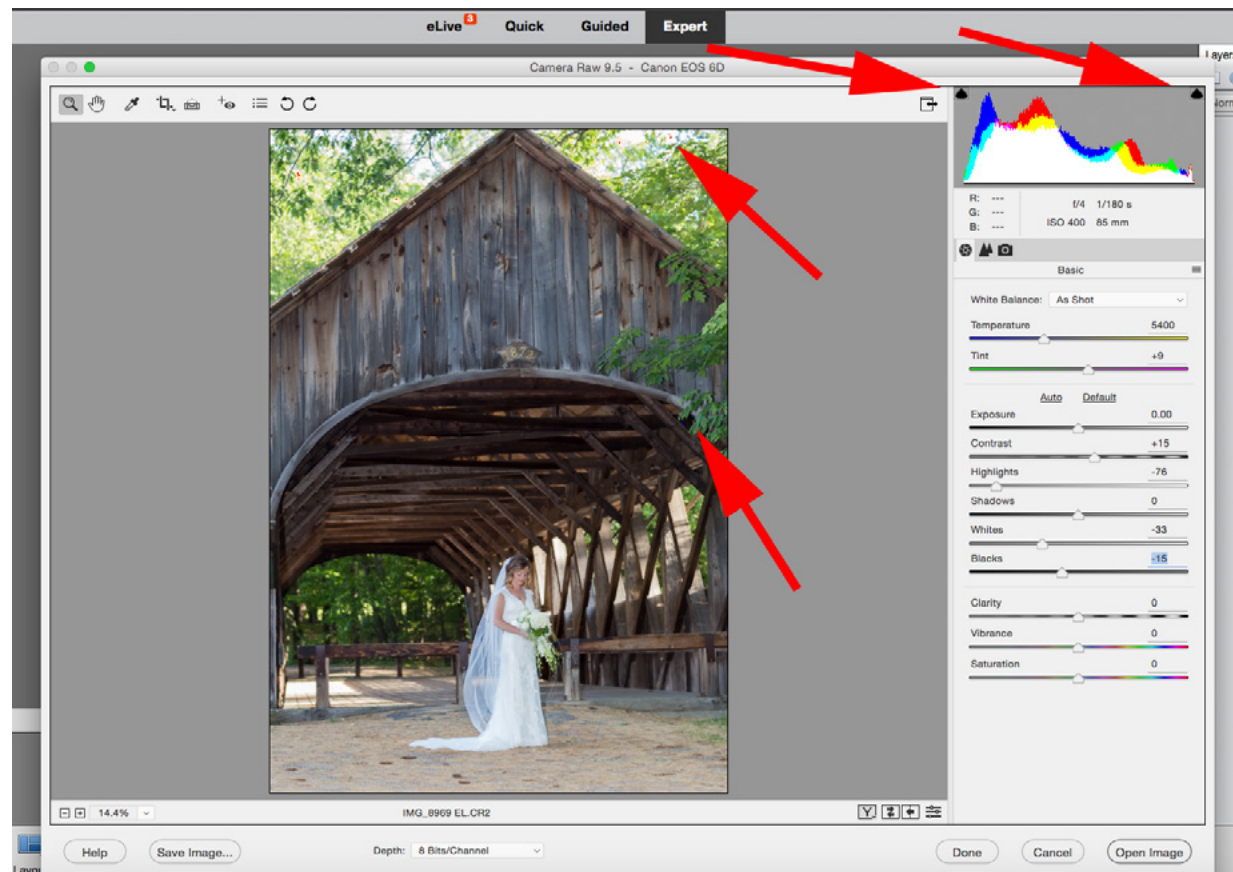


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 108

I’m going to hammer home a couple of very important points regarding exposure:

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 are showing 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 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 clipping in the shadows, it will appear as a blue mask over the preview image.

Use the Clipping Indicators to help you 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 view (such as in Reference 108), and the histogram will not be “cut off” 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. In Reference 108, the left-facing arrow pointing at the bridge shows a tiny bit of shadow clipping, and the upper left-facing red arrow, pointing toward the sky, points to a tiny bit of highlight clipping.

Read the Photoshop section to understand setting the Contrast.

Steps Seven and Eight – Color Temperature and Color Tint

Review the Photoshop section for detailed information on color temperature and color tint, and then return here to move along.

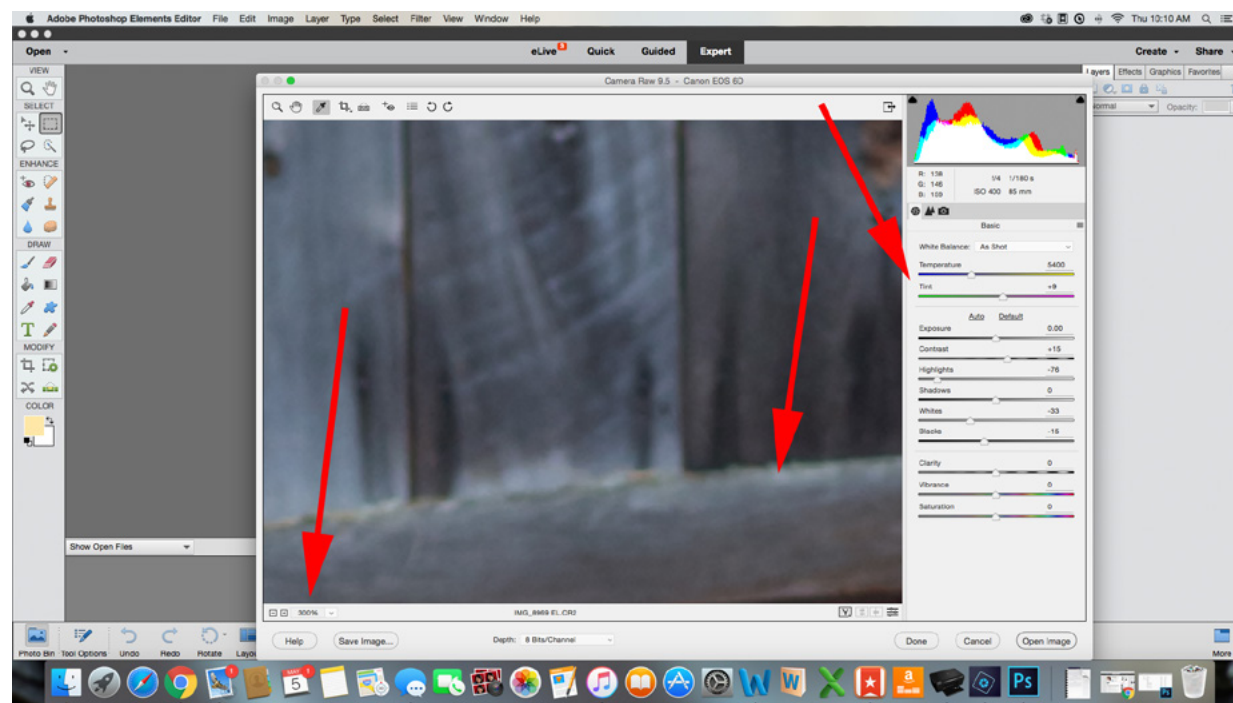


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 109

Reference 109 shows how I have set up my workspace to adjust the “Temperature” and “Tint.”

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

I did this to illustrate a point.

Unless you go to a great deal of trouble, color temperature and color tint are very subjective. Using the method that I’m going to describe here is going to yield slightly different results than what I described in the Photoshop section; however, both versions look fine.

Here is a key step to becoming a better photographer and a better post-production editor. Develop a system and stick to it.

In the Photoshop section, I took my sample from a 100% preview of the photograph. In the Elements section, I’m taking my sample from a 300% preview of the photograph. What was the difference? The 300% preview gives a smaller sample section. Are either method perfectly right, or the other one wrong? No. Like I said in the Photoshop section, the only time that 100% accurate 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 109, the far left arrow shows that I have set the Preview Window to 300%. The highlighted box on the upper left shows where the “White Balance” tool is located. The second arrow from the left shows where I took my sample using the White Balance Tool. The upper right facing arrow shows the Color and Tint settings before I left-clicked the White Balance Tool on my selected area.

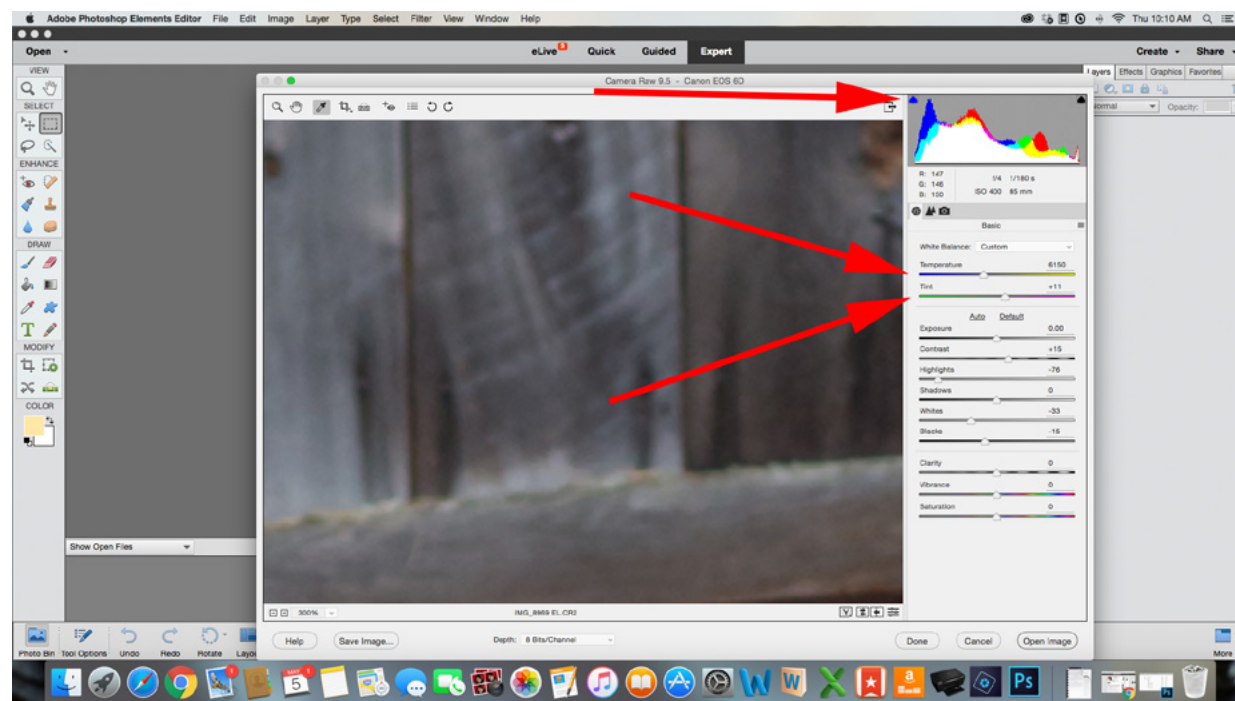


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 110

In Reference 110, you can see that after a left click of the White Balance tool, on my sample area, the Temperature and Tint sliders have readjusted. Visually, it's easy to see how much of the color blue was removed. Compare References 109 and 110.

Key Lesson: As you make adjustments throughout your Fundamental Edits List, you may notice the Clipping Indicator icons turning different colors. This occurs if the histogram is set to RGB instead of Luminosity. What these changing colors tell us is that the different color channels are experiencing clipping. This has little bearing on what most of us will ever be concerned with. What I'm saying is, "Ignore it, or set your histogram to Luminosity UNTIL you come to the Temperature and Tint steps." Watching the histogram, in RGB, when setting the Temperature and Tint will help you to determine if there is a colorcast within your image. For example, in References 109 and 110, you can see the blue channel dropping down in the second histogram (after we took our sample). This indicates that a blue colorcast was removed. You should become concerned if either Clipping Indicator turns white. That means all three of the color channels have gone off the grid, and that's where your image quality is going to nosedive. But, once again (just to hammer home this important point), what does it mean when the Clipping Indicator changes colors? It means that a particular color channel has been clipped.

In Reference 110, you can see where the shadow Clipping Indicator has turned blue; that means the blue channel is being “clipped” in the shadow end. Now, you can play around with the Exposure, Contrast, Highlights, Shadows, Whites, and Blacks sliders until that clipping is gone. What I’m trying to impart to you is the fact that you don’t have to. Earlier in the Photoshop section, when I talked about completing the Fundamental Edits List, I mentioned that it requires three things from you as the editor: evaluating the histogram, watching the RGB numbers, and visually checking the Preview image. If your image looks good, don’t worry about one or two channels clipping!

Self-Check Quiz

1. True or False: In Adobe Elements there is no way to open a .jpeg file in the Camera Raw Processing Window.
2. True or False: If I click the “File” drop-down menu and then select “Open,” there is no way for me to do my Fundamental Edits List in the Camera Raw Processing Window.
3. True or False: When doing my Fundamental Edits List, I should use the Quick Mode.
4. True or False: Unlike Photoshop, the Crop tool within the Elements version of the Camera Raw Processing Window permanently crops my image.
5. When doing noise reduction, I should reduce the _____ noise first, and then reduce the _____ noise second.
6. I know the clipping indicator is on when _____ happens.
7. In Elements, I will use the _____ to help me set my White Point and my Black Point.
8. True or False: Setting the Temperature and Tint is an exacting process.
9. I should be aware when one, or both, Clipping

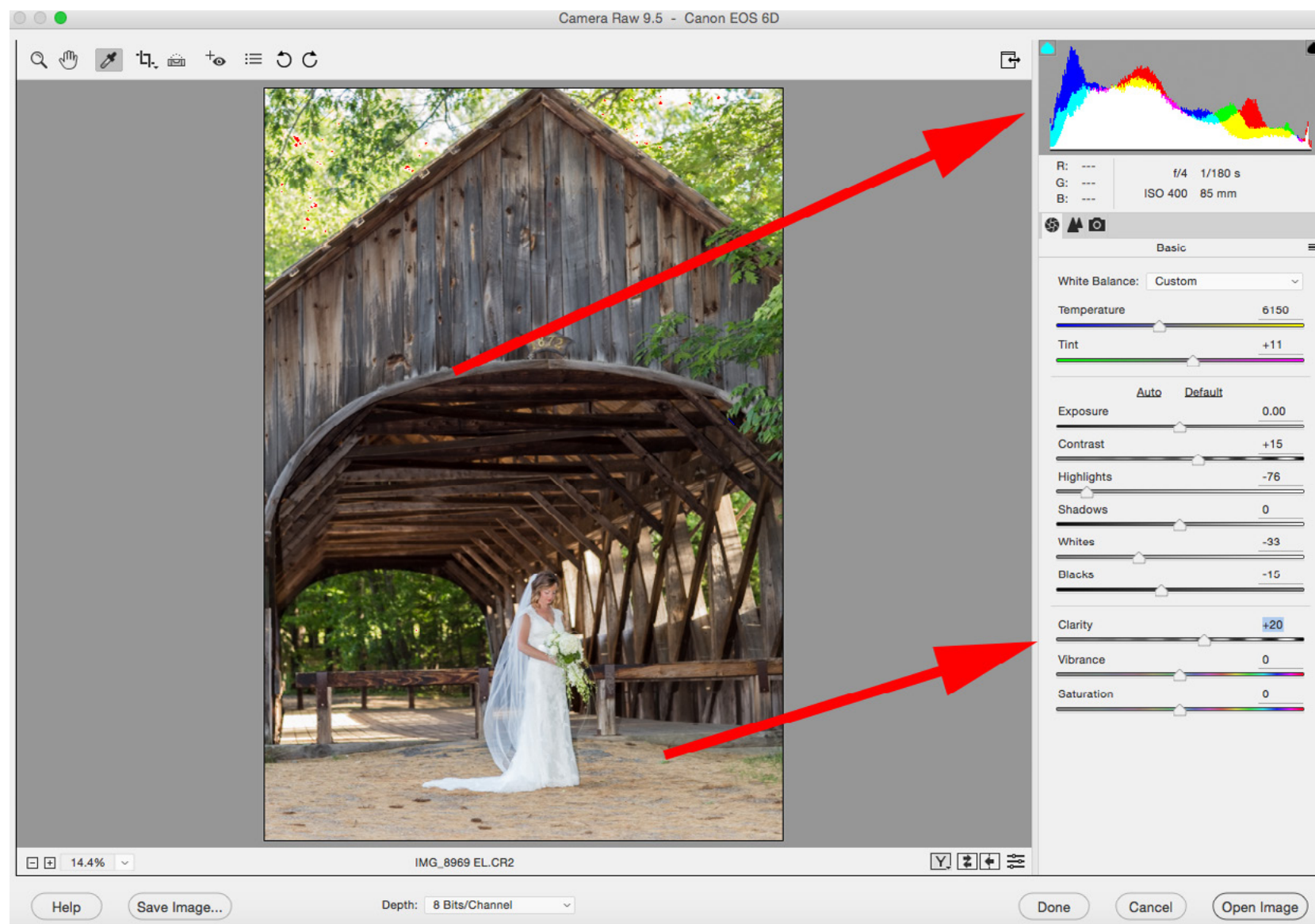


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 111

Indicators do what?

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 the bridal portrait was +20. How did I come to that conclusion? By adjusting the slider back and forth while watching both the histogram and the Preview image. Not too exacting, huh? That’s just the way it is.

This what you need to know about the Clarity setting:

Increased “Clarity” creates the visual illusion of adding depth and sharpness.

It does this by creating more contrast in the middle 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; therefore, it's essential to complete this step before doing the image Sharpening (which is one of the reasons why Sharpening is last on the Fundamental Edits List).

Steps Ten and Eleven – Vibrancy and Saturation

Be sure to read the earlier sections on these critical steps in the Fundamental Edits 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 a success or not is up to personal taste.

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

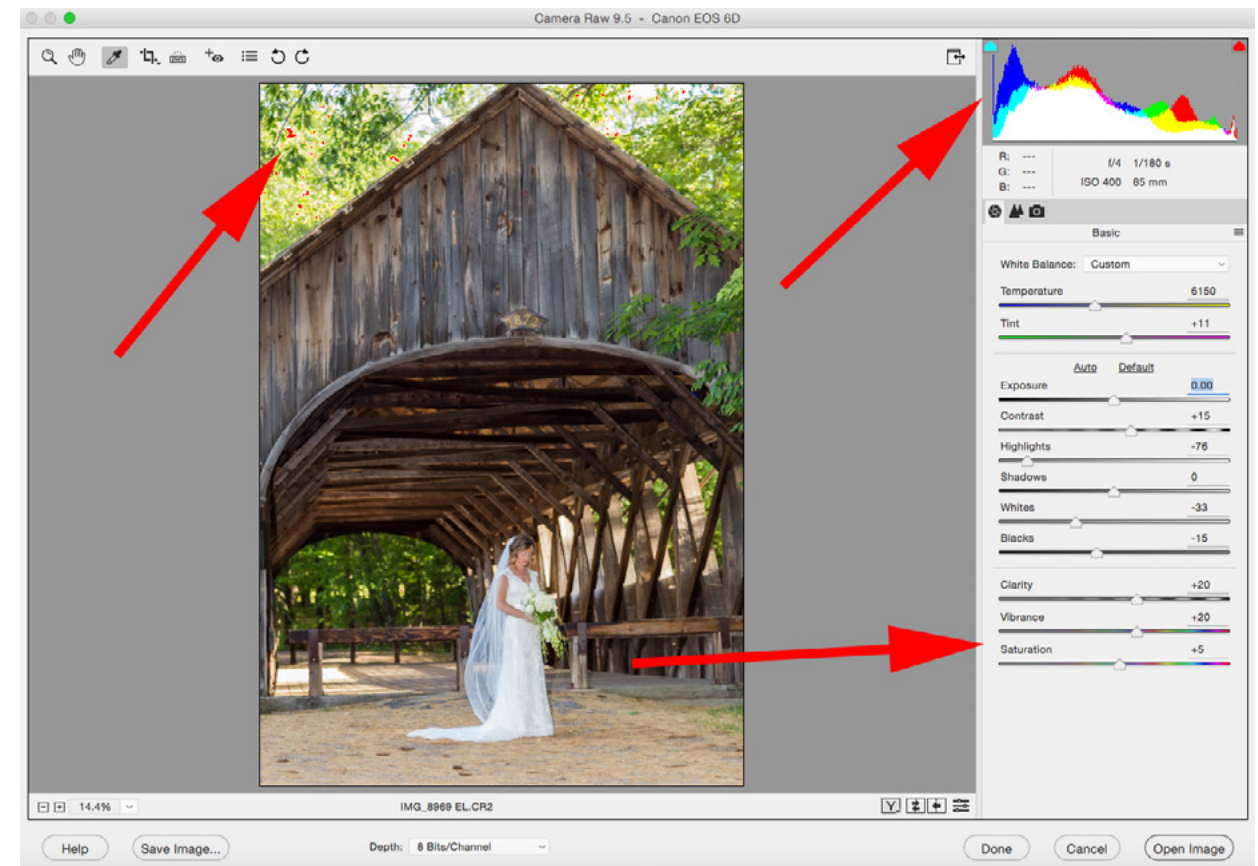


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 112

Reference 112 shows that I decided on a Vibrance setting of +20 and a Saturation setting of +5.

The upper-left red arrow points out that the highlight clipping has increased. However, take a look at the highlight Clipping Indicator. It is red, indicating that the highlight clipping is primarily occurring in the red channel. And, what did we learn before? We're cool with that as long as the Clipping Indicator isn't white, and the Preview image looks good to our eyes.

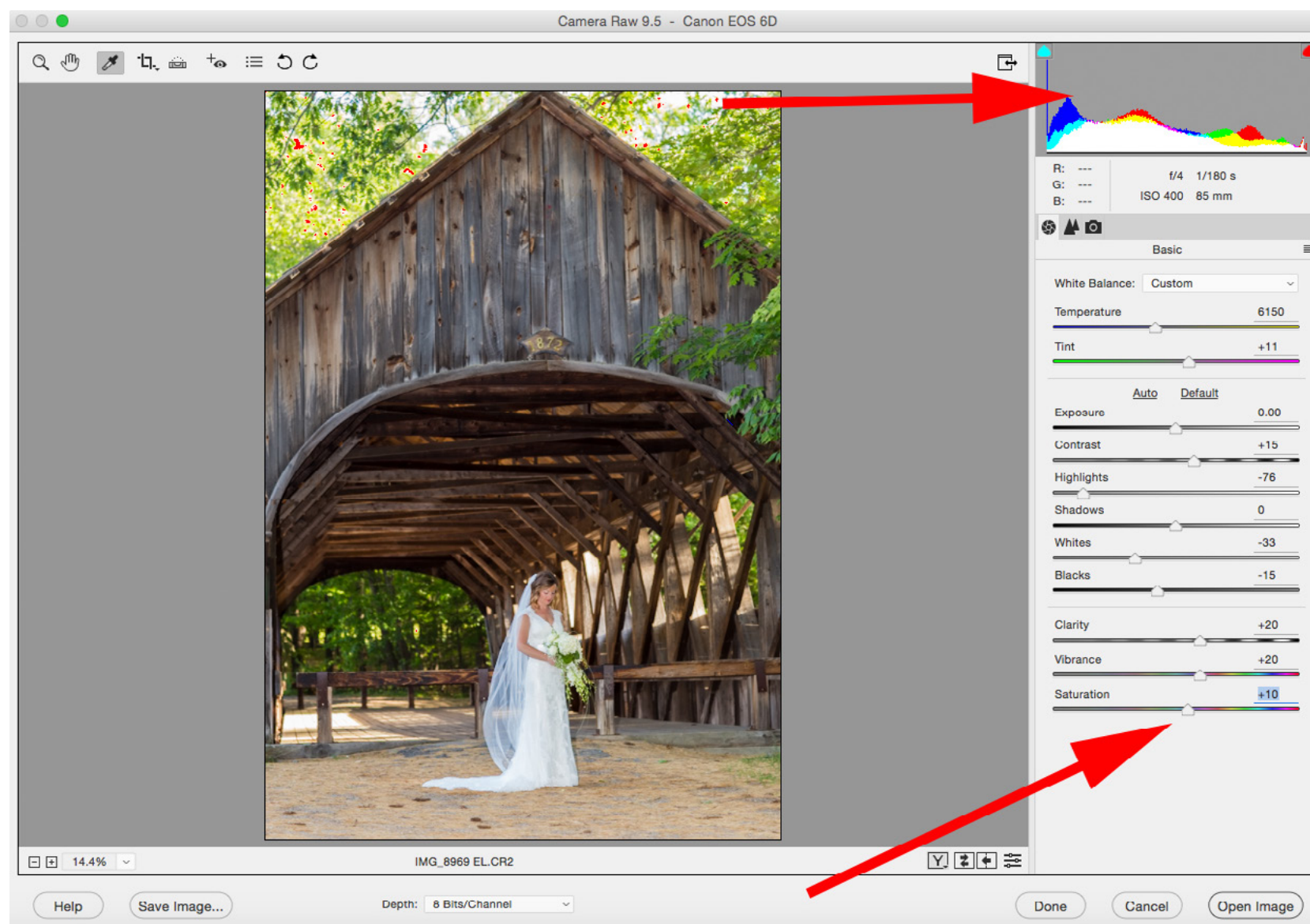


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 113

The upper right arrow points out a clear spike on the shadow Clipping Indicator. However, we follow the same set of rules. The indicator is not white, and the image looks good.

In Reference 113, I increased the saturation to +10. Look at the histogram, where the upper red arrow is pointing. What happened? The entire tonal range was cut almost in half! This is an excellent way to judge your vibrancy and saturation levels. Watch the histogram. The tonal range will generally remain the same as you make your adjustments until a certain point. At that point, it will radically change, and this indicates that you're probably going too far!

Assignment

Hopefully, you have been following along with your sample file. I want you to highlight the Saturation Slider setting box (it turns a light blue color). Then, I want you to use the “Up” and “Down” keys on your keyboard to increase the saturation from 0 to +10 going one numerical step at a time. Watch the histogram. What happens? The histogram changed very little from 0 to +5, and then radically changed from +5 to +10. This is a clear indication that an appropriate saturation level was reached at +5.

Now, repeat this same process with the Vibrance slider. Go from 0 to +38. What happened? The same thing! The only difference is that the Vibrance setting allows more of a “push” before it goes out of whack.

This is a great technique to help you recognize the extremes. Does this mean that you should NEVER put these settings beyond those points? NO! Maybe you’re trying to do a special effect. But... if you’re shooting assignments for money, then you need to know when you’re going too far!

Step Twelve – Efex: Vignette

For Elements users, steps twelve through fourteen are where the program falls a little short for you. You will have to now open your image within the program to complete those steps.

Because of that, we’re going to do a loop-de-loop and complete step fifteen before we exit out of 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 on each of those functions.

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

WE ARE JUMPING AHEAD TO STEP FIFTEEN!

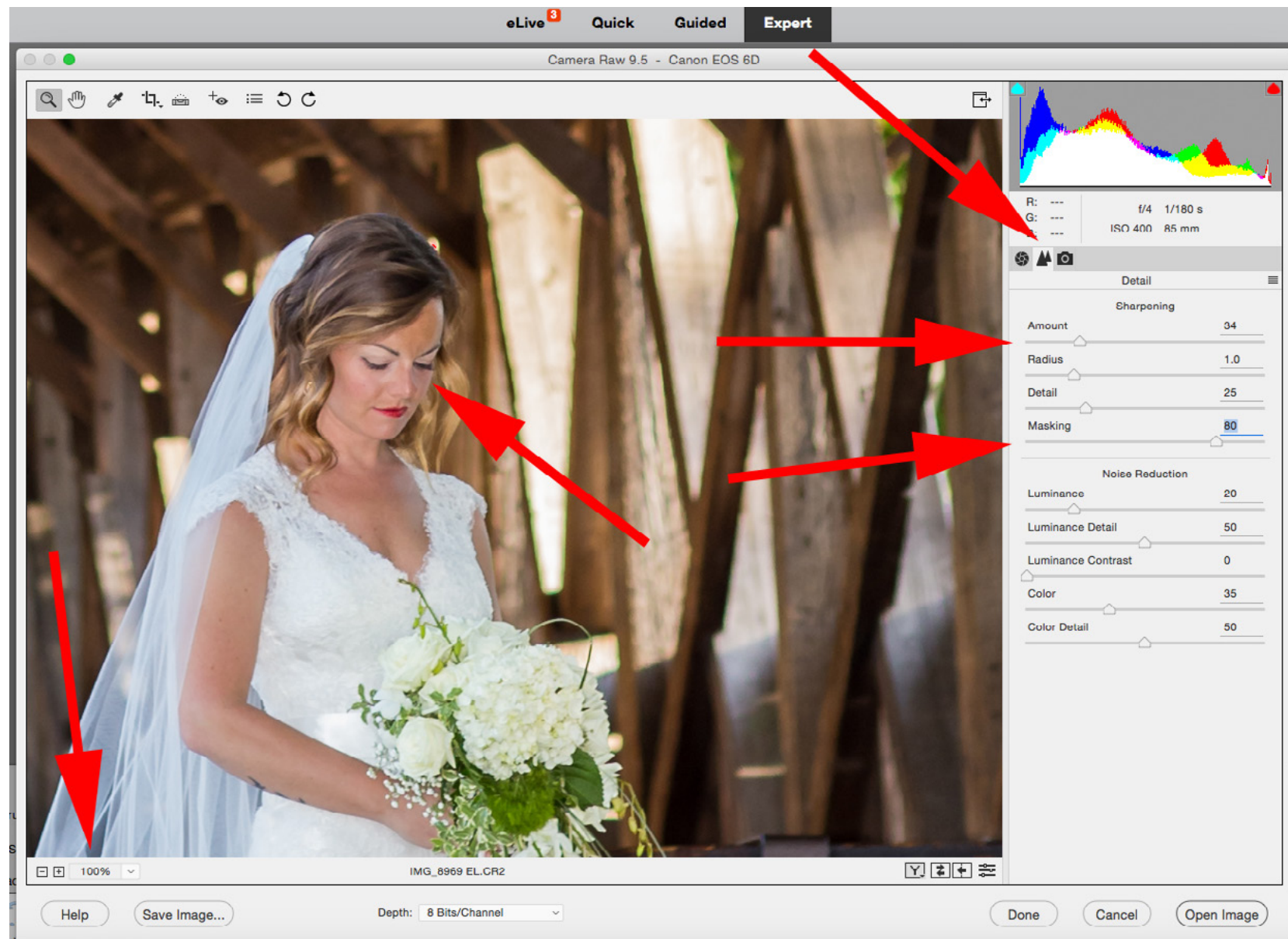


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 114

Step Fifteen – Sharpening

Hopefully, you read the previous Photoshop and Lightroom sections about sharpening. Look at Reference 114 for some important points to remember.

You want your Preview image to be set at 100%.

You want to adjust your preview image so that you're looking at the most important part of your subject—the part that should be the sharpest.

You click the “Details” tab to see the “Sharpening” tools.

Increase the “Amount” 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 important edge details are being sharpened.

Key Lesson: Sharpening is an often abused post-production edit. I want to clarify something with 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 pretty close to sharp. This bridal portrait was critically focused, with the camera on a tripod, using a very high quality lens, and yet it needs a little sharpening to restore exact detail. Focus in on that phrase: “a little sharpening.” Trying to create sharpness in a poorly shot photograph leads to awful images that look entirely amateur. 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!

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

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

Make sure that the histogram is made visible on the workspace.

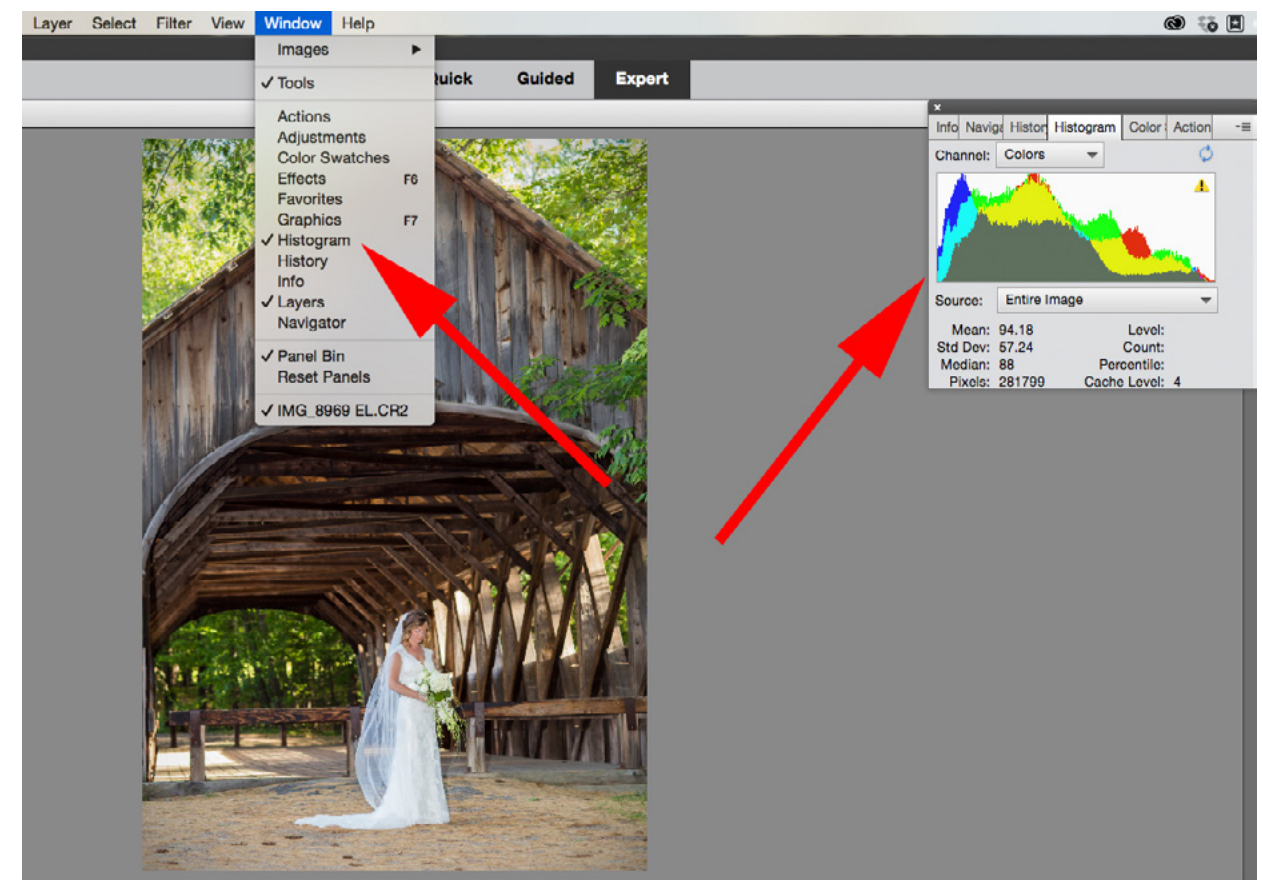


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 115

Since we are done with all of our color adjustments, I want you to set the histogram to Luminosity. You do this by opening the “Channels” drop-down menu and making the selection.

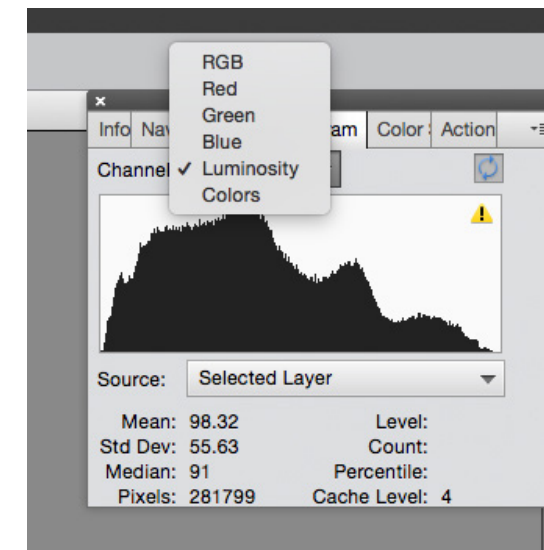


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 116

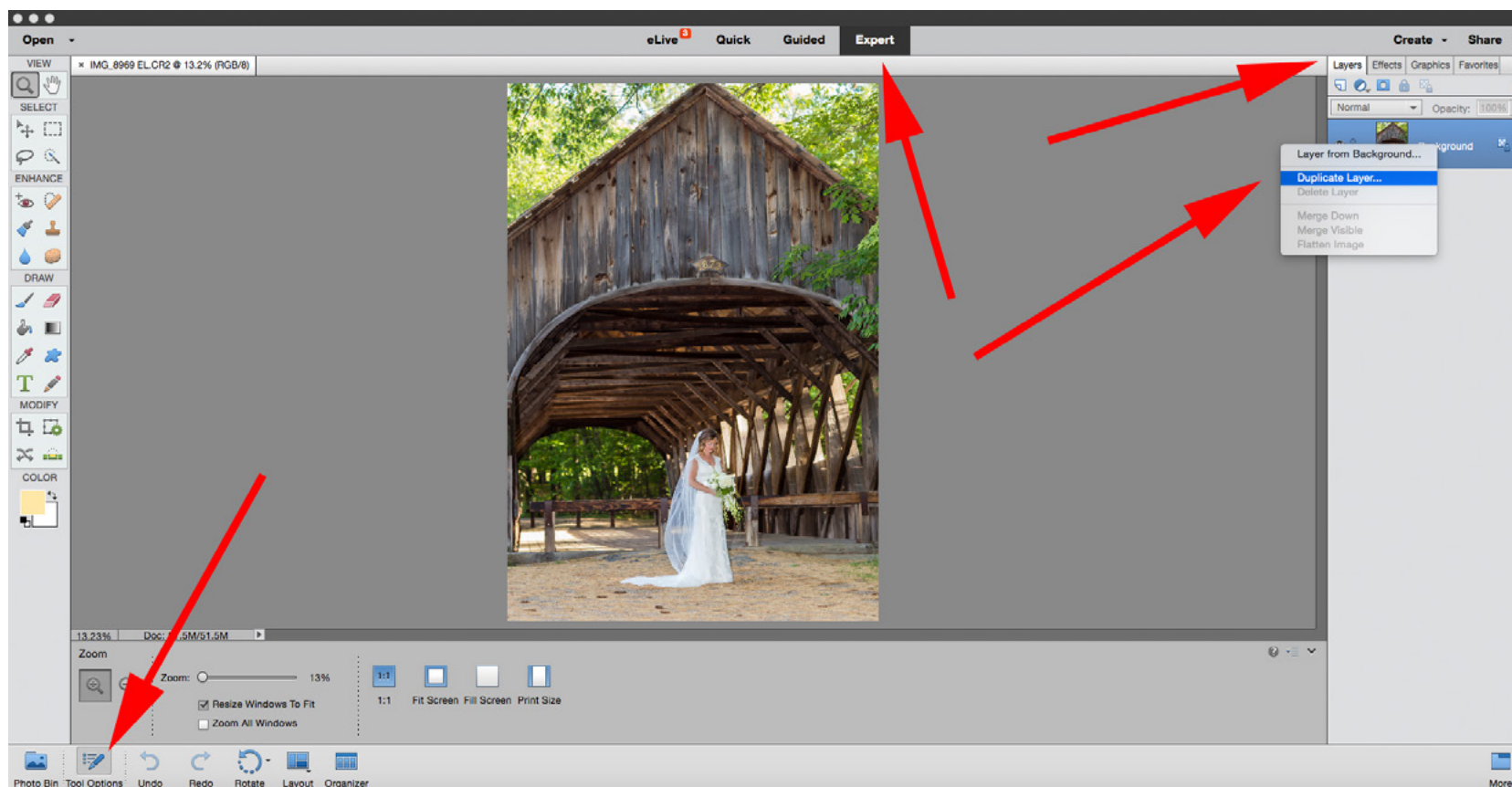


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 117

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

Double check that you are in “Expert” mode.

Make sure “Tool Options” is selected.

Select the “Layers” tab on the right.

Right click on the “Background” layer.

Select “Duplicate Layer.”

Name the new layer “Vignette.”

We are now ready to move forward. We are going to complete our final steps of the Fundamental Edits List by creating a new layer for each step. Doing so preserves our original file at the bottom and each step will be on its own layer. When we go to save our work, if we save it in layers, we can undo some of what we did if we change our minds later.

Step Twelve – Efex: Vignette

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

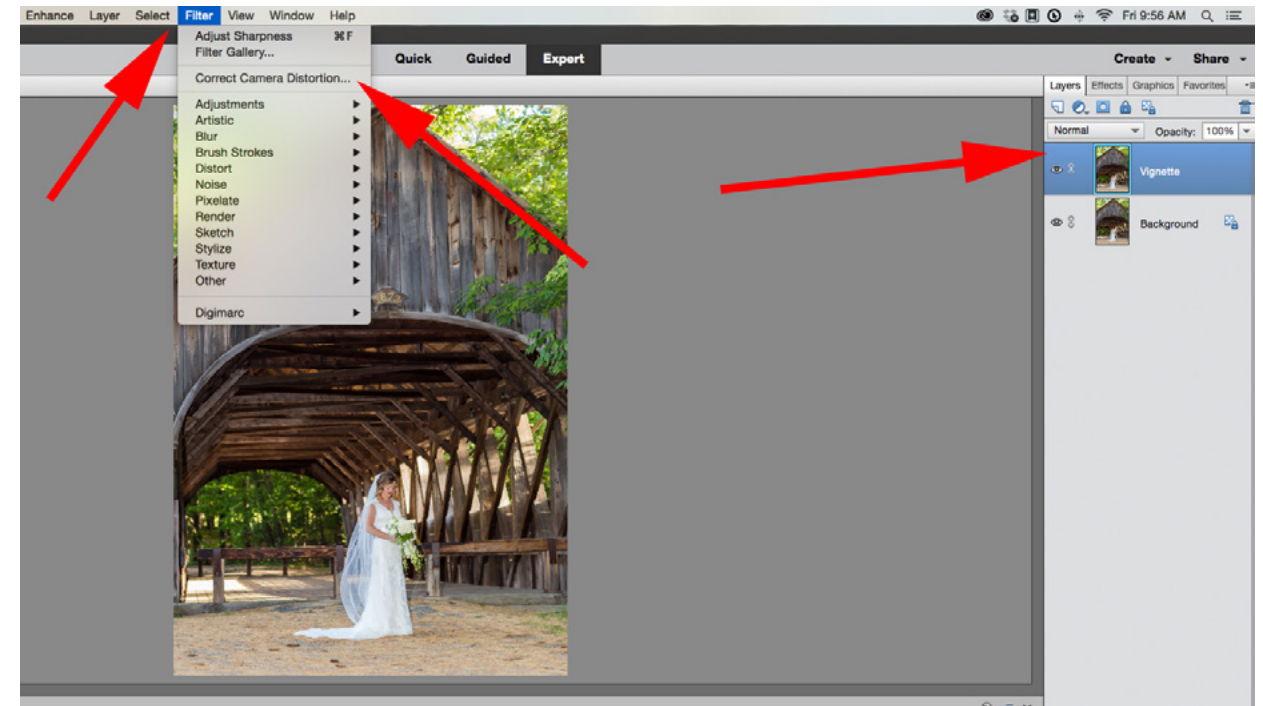


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 118

Make sure the Vignette layer is selected.

Go to the "Filter" drop-down menu and select "Correct Camera Distortion."

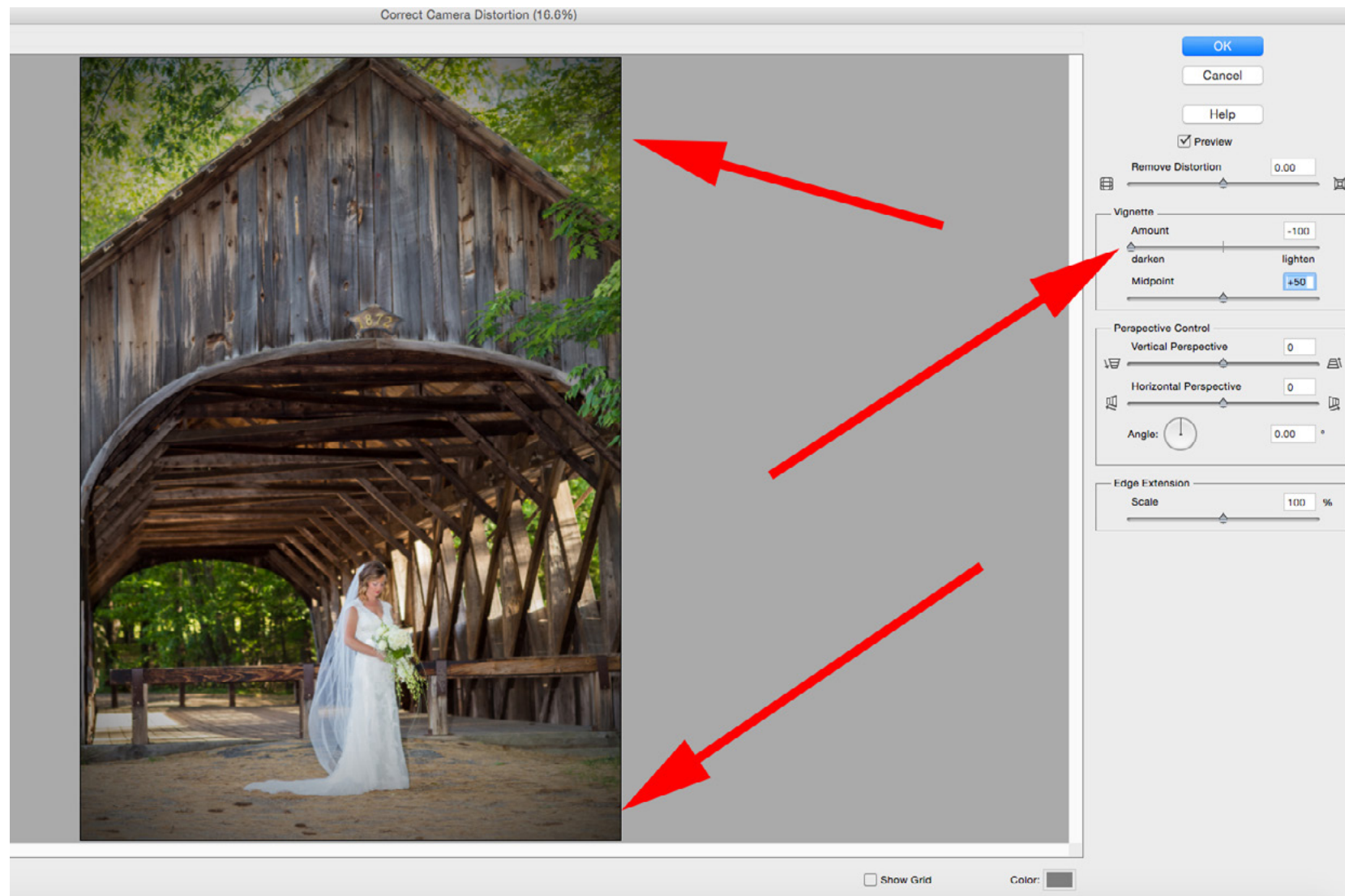
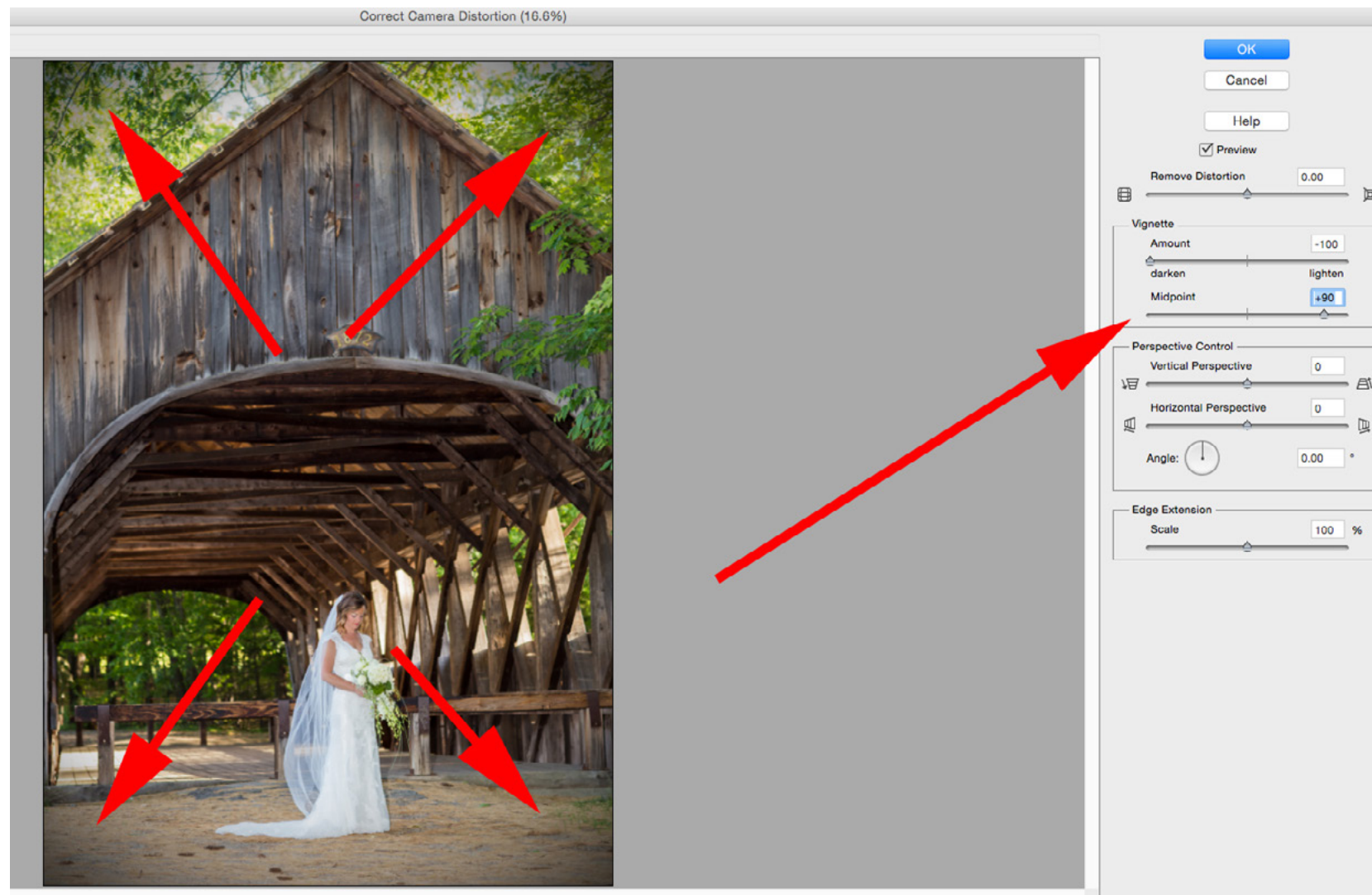


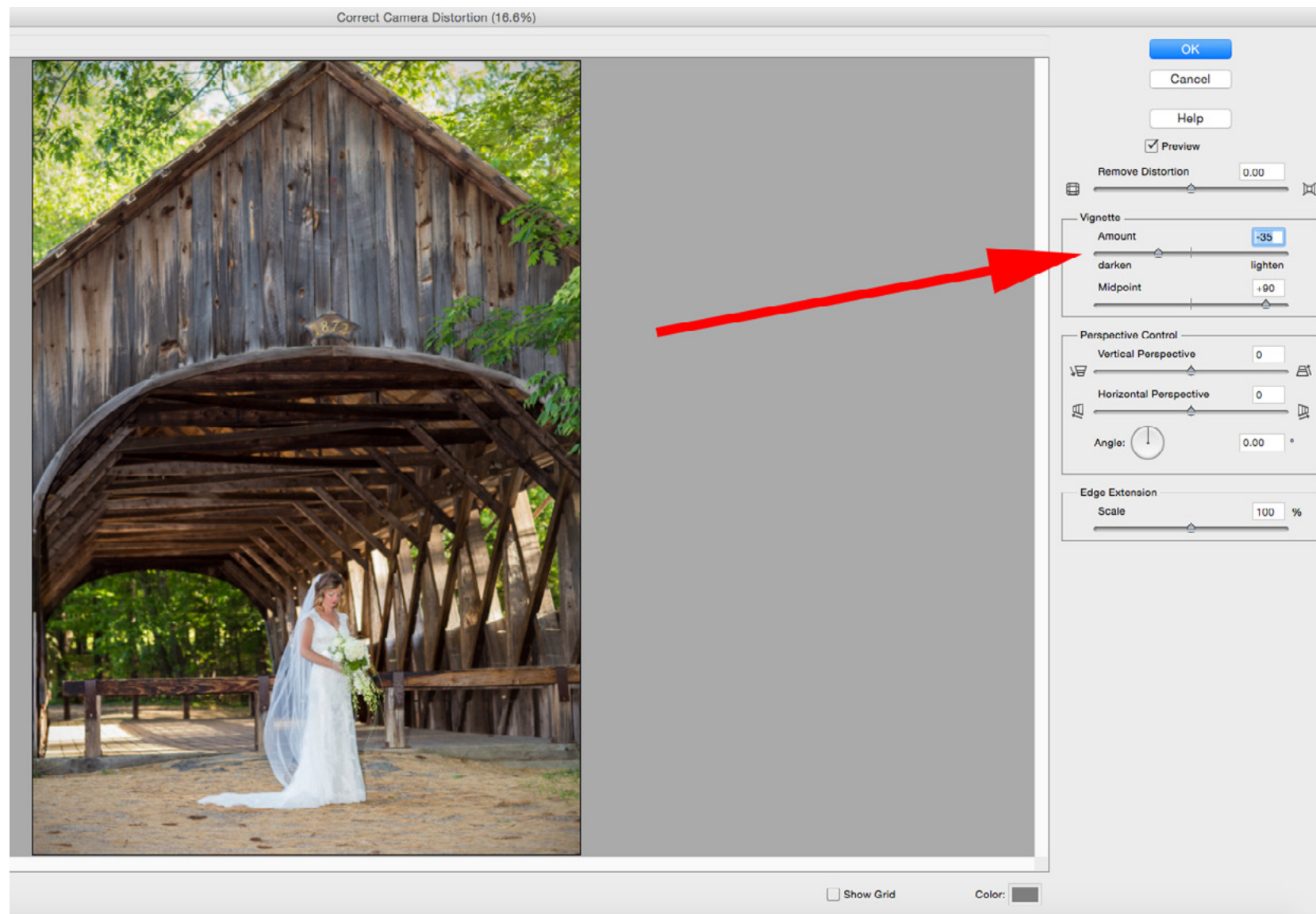
Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 119

In the Vignette toolbox, reduce the "Amount" slider to -100. This will give us the clearest view of where the vignette is occurring. A primary difference between Elements and the other two programs is that Elements does not give you a feathering adjustment for the vignette. There may be other work-around methods for applying a vignette with a feather. Using this method, my suggestion is to just go light with any vignette that you apply.



Increase the “Midpoint” until the vignette is only being applied at the corners. Again, this is because we have no feathering options or the ability to bring the highlights back up (see the Photoshop section).

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 120



Increase the "Amount" slider until you see the effect just slightly in the corners.

Click "Okay."

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 121

Step Thirteen – Efex: Dehaze

The Dehaze function has already been discussed thoroughly. You're already aware that it isn't really applicable to this particular photograph. However, I do want to make this one point:

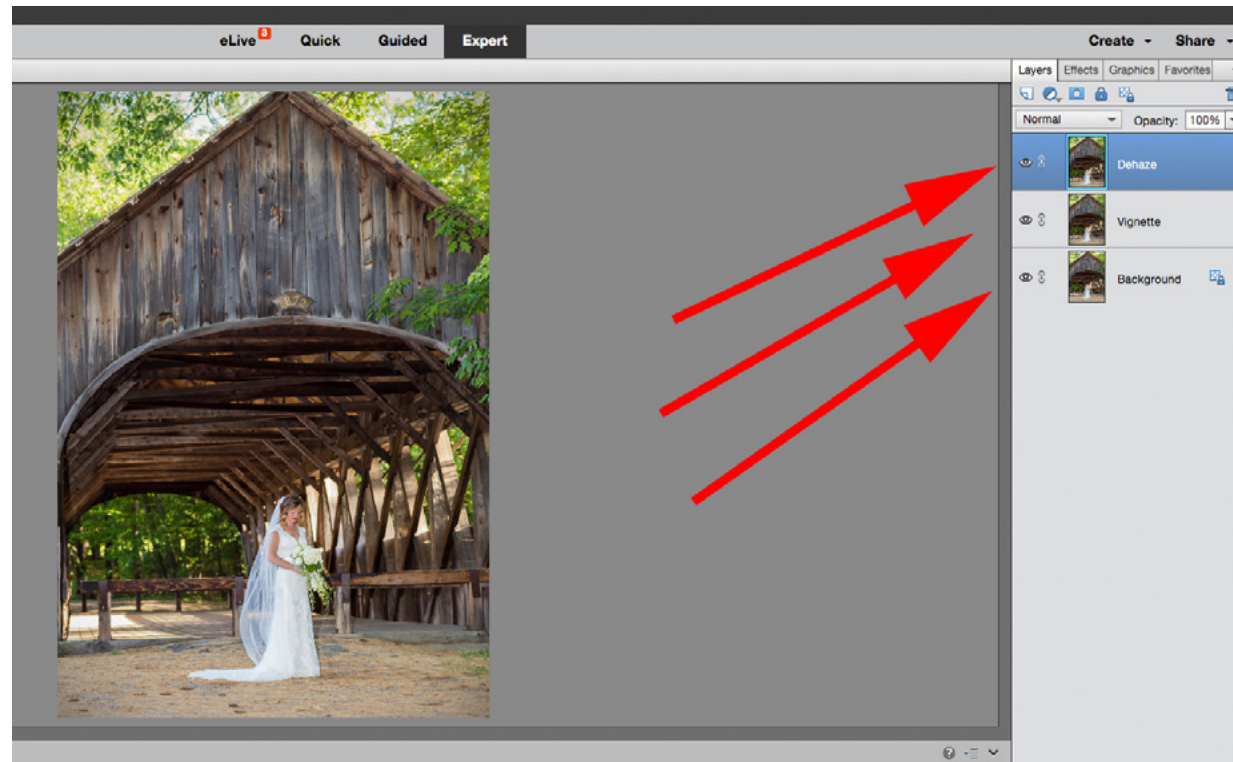


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 122

In Reference 122, I want you to take note (again) that each step is being given its own layer. This is accomplished by simply duplicating the layer below as we move through these final steps in the Fundamental Edits List.

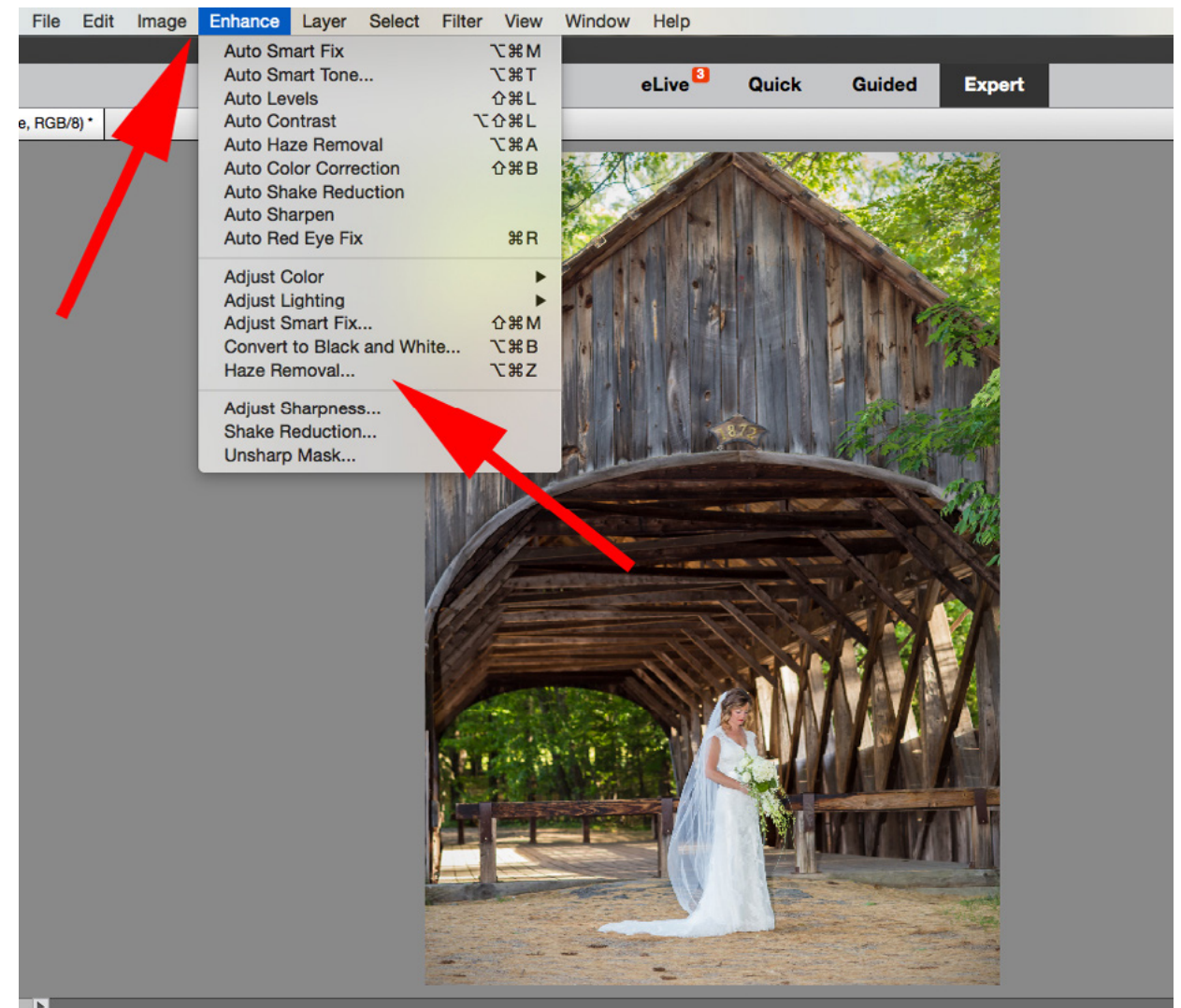


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 123

If we were going to apply the Dehaze step, we would find it under the "Enhance" menu.

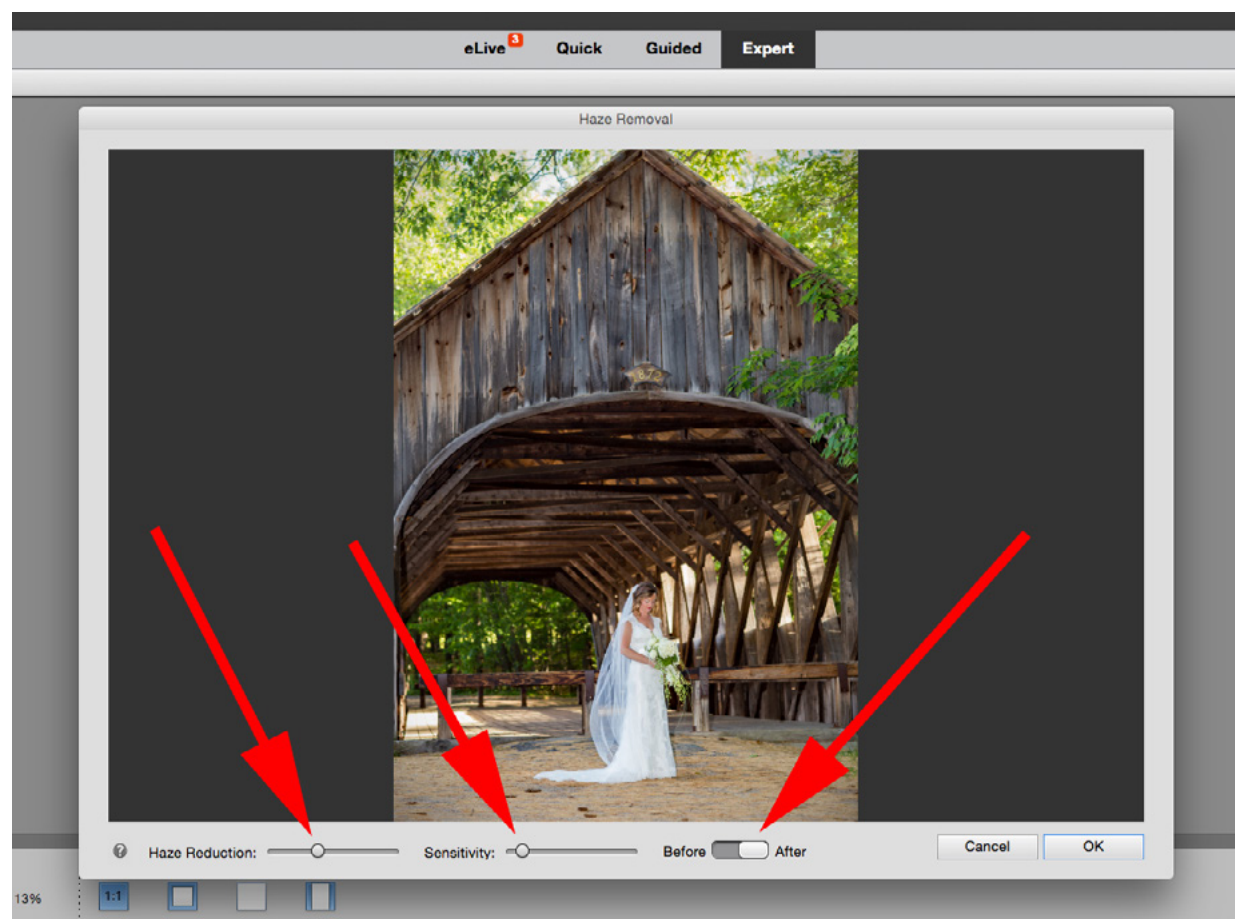


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 124

Reference 124 depicts the limited controls for the “Haze Removal” function within Elements. Unfortunately, it 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 contrast in areas that are detected by the software. There is an “Auto Haze Removal” function under the “Enhance” drop-down 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 contrast and reduces levels.

The “Sensitivity” slider controls where the software applies 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.

Step Fourteen – Localized Adjustments with the Adjustment Brush

Elements, does not provide an Adjustment Brush that “operates” in a similar manner 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 in an attempt to “make it easy” they’ve taken out the benefits for a serious photographer.

It doesn’t allow localized sharpening, which is one of my favorite effects with the Adjustment Brush. Plus, it’s just 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.

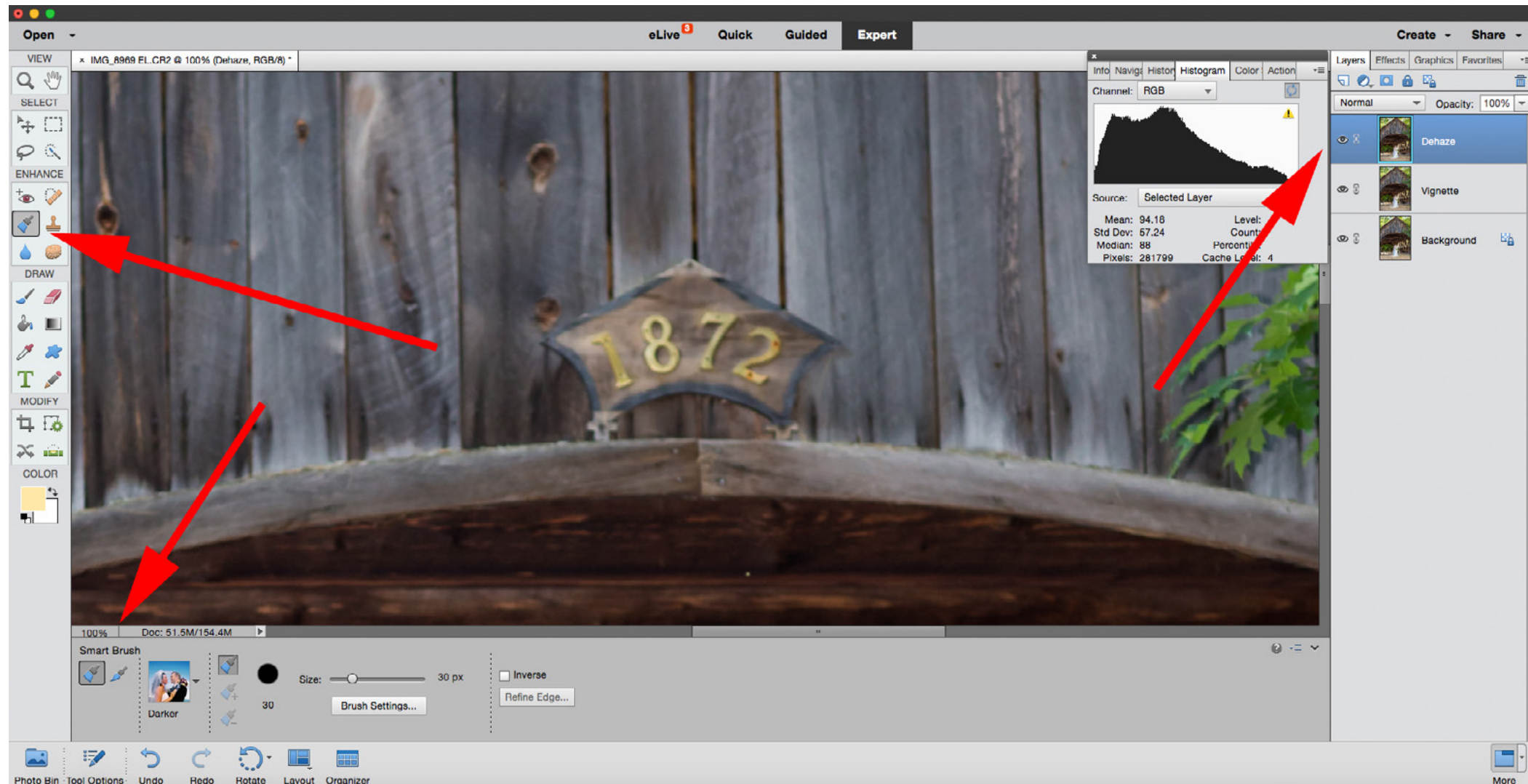


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 125

In Reference 125, the upper-left facing arrow points out the Smart Brush Tool. The lower-left facing arrow points out the tool settings. These settings include:

- The Smart Brush
- The Smart Detail Brush
- The Picker
- The Selection Tools
- The Brush Size
- An Inverse Function

(The right-facing arrow points out that we created a new layer to work on.)

For the purposes of this guide, I'm going to show you how to use the Smart Brush to recreate one of the edits that we did in the previous sections using the Adjustment Brush. We're going to brighten up the contrast and saturation of the "1872" on the bridge. In a later guide, we will look at the Smart Brush in more detail.

When you select the Smart Brush, and then if you click anywhere in the Preview Window, Adobe Elements is going to 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.

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

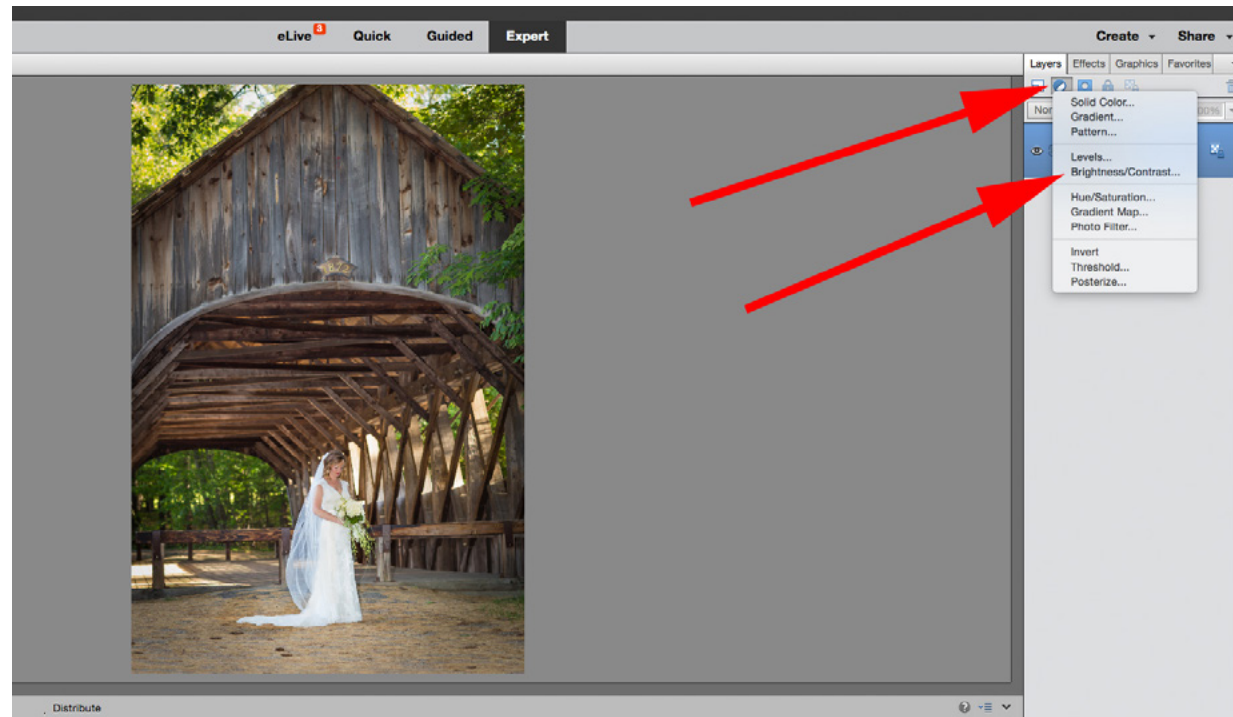


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 126

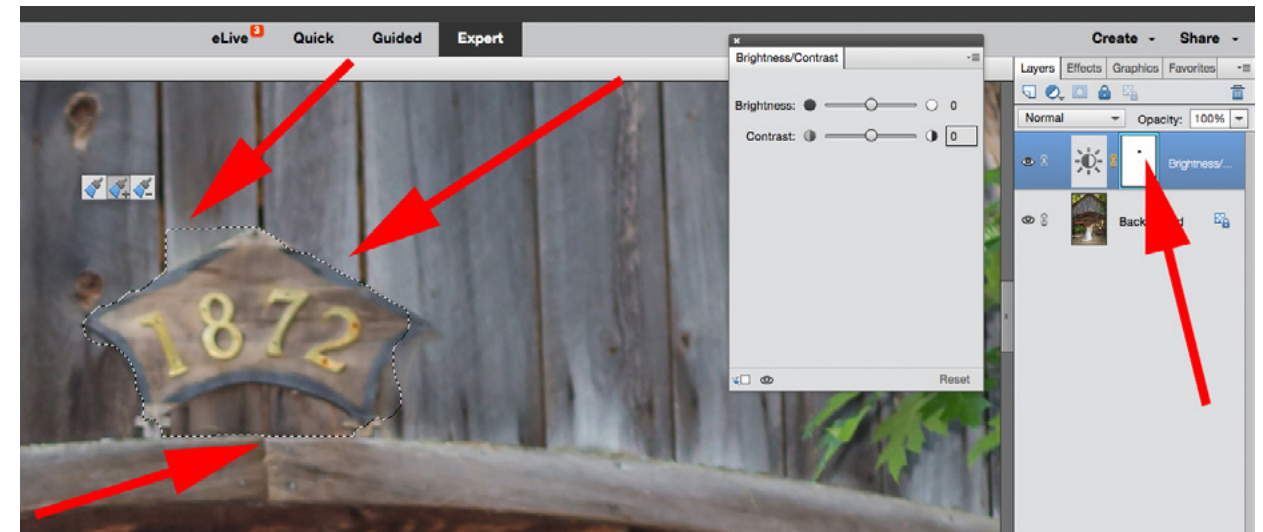


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 127

After we create the Adjustment Layer, we want to make sure the "Mask" is selected. The far right arrow points to the mask box. You'll know that it is selected when it has a blue box around it.

Now select the Smart Brush and begin to paint over the sign. 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 black area appearing. This is your mask. If your mask appears black, with a small white area, you have your mask inverted. Uncheck the box at the bottom that says "Inverse."

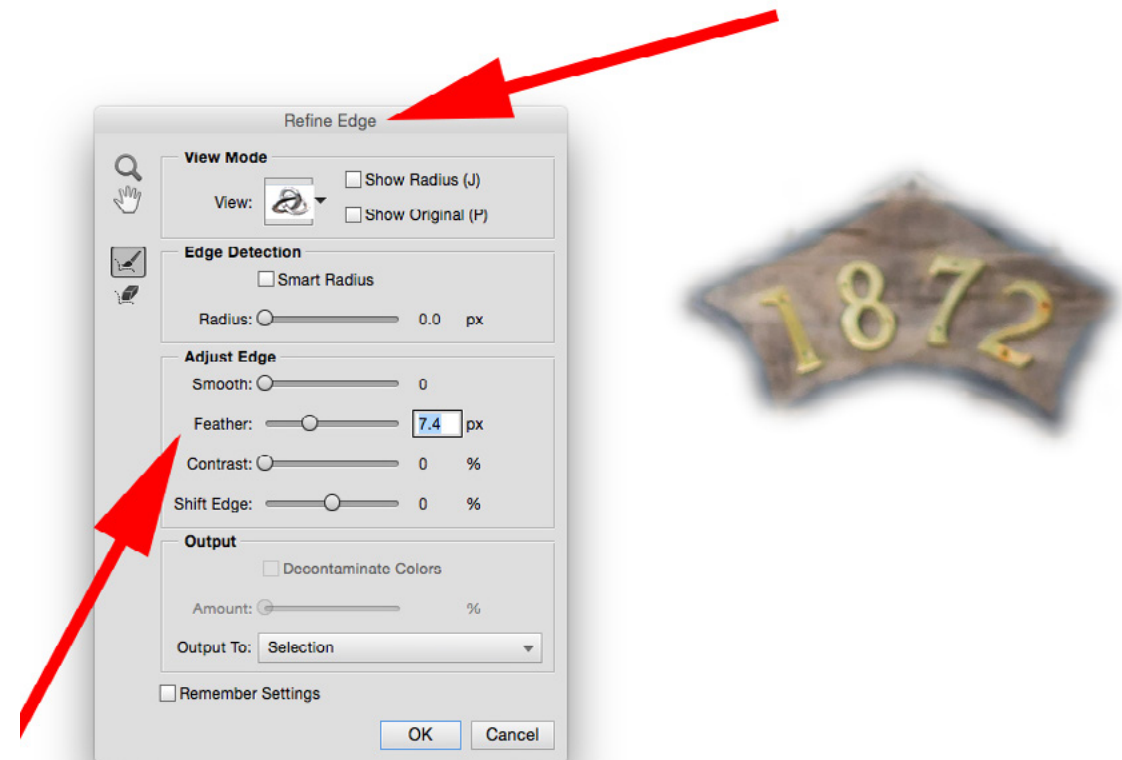


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 128

After you've made your selection, you can refine it by clicking on the "Refine Edge" radio button. If you click on "View," you can change the way that you see the mask on the Preview Image. You can add a feather to the edge of the mask, which I'm going to do here. If you wish to save your settings as "Preference," click the "Remember Settings" box.

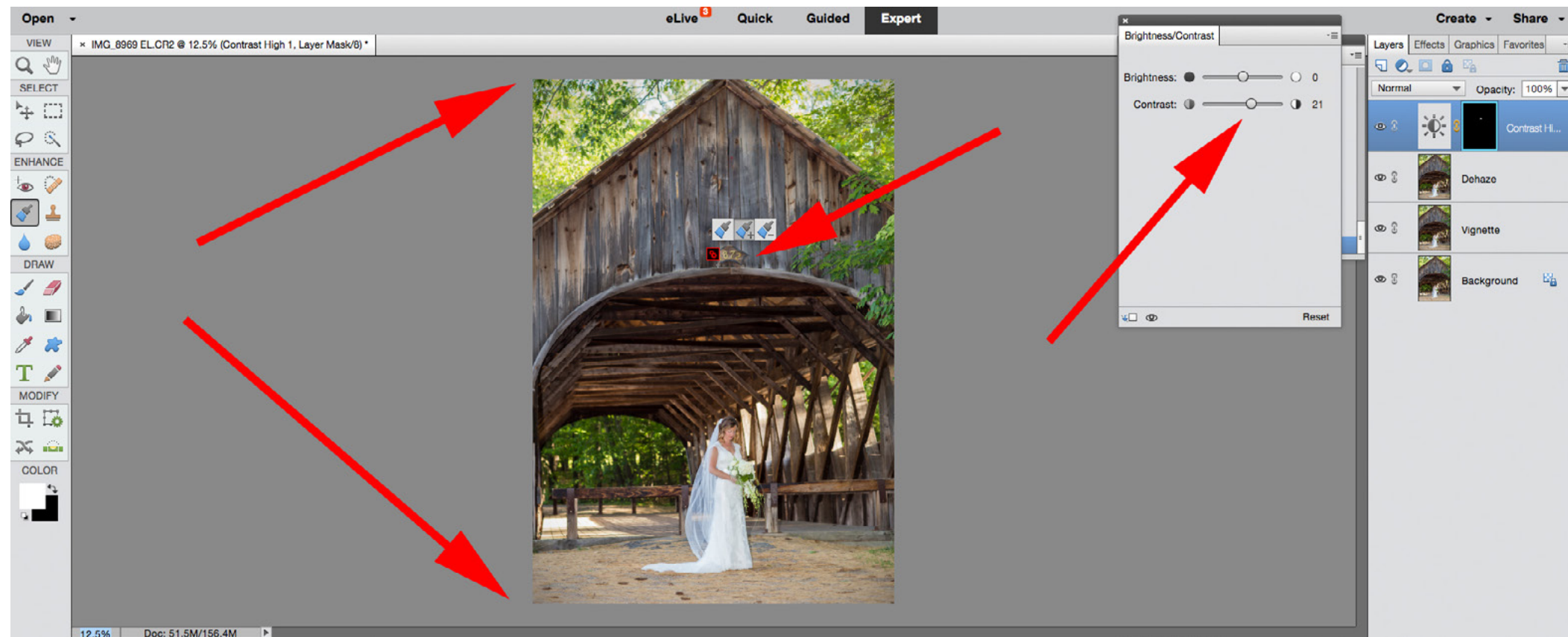


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 129

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 100% view and a full frame view. The 100% view helps you to detect if your adjustments are spilling into areas that you don't want them to, or if you're creating artifacts. The full-frame view helps you visualize how your changes look within 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.

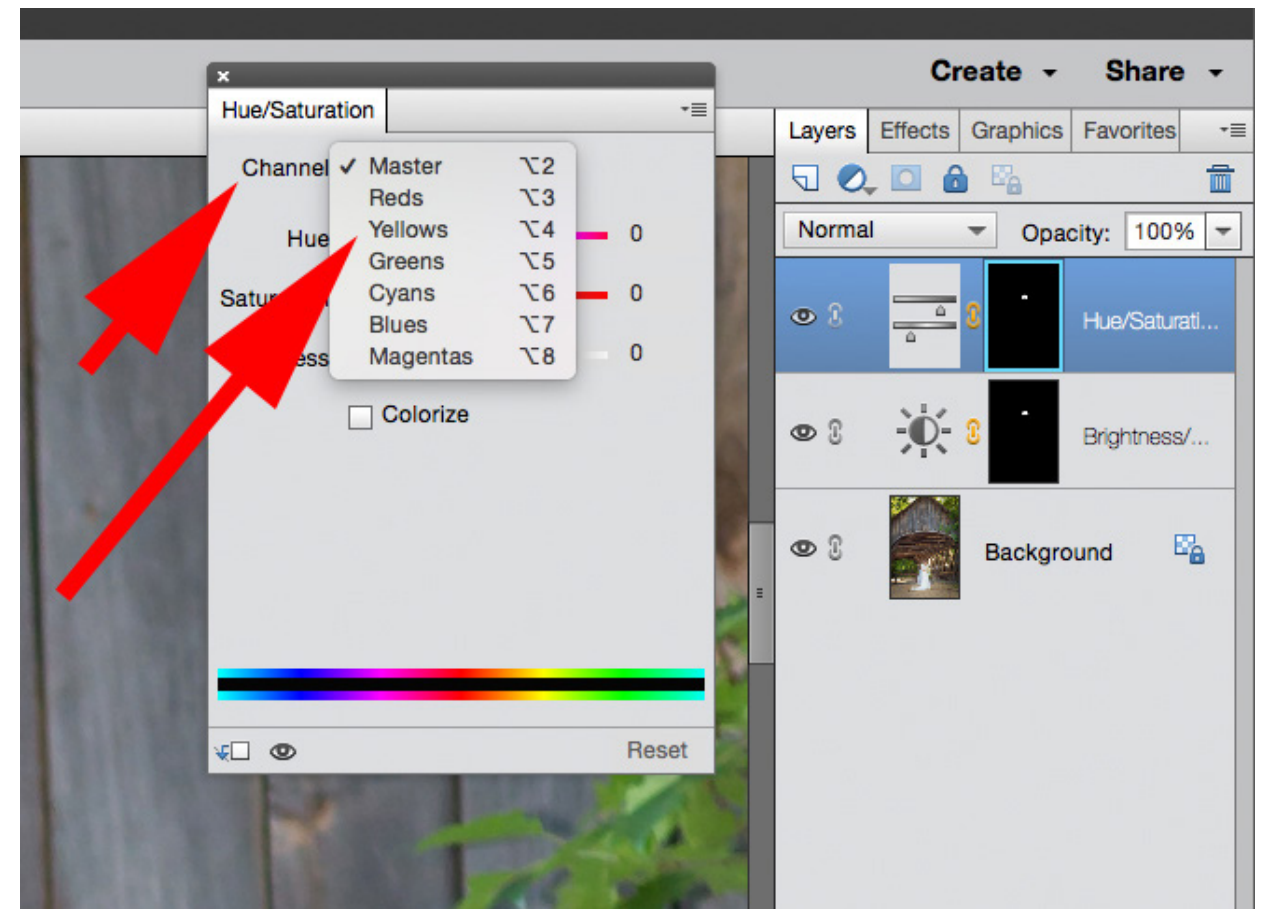


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 130

Now, just as we did previously in the other sections, we are going to increase the saturation of the yellow in the 1872 sign.

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

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

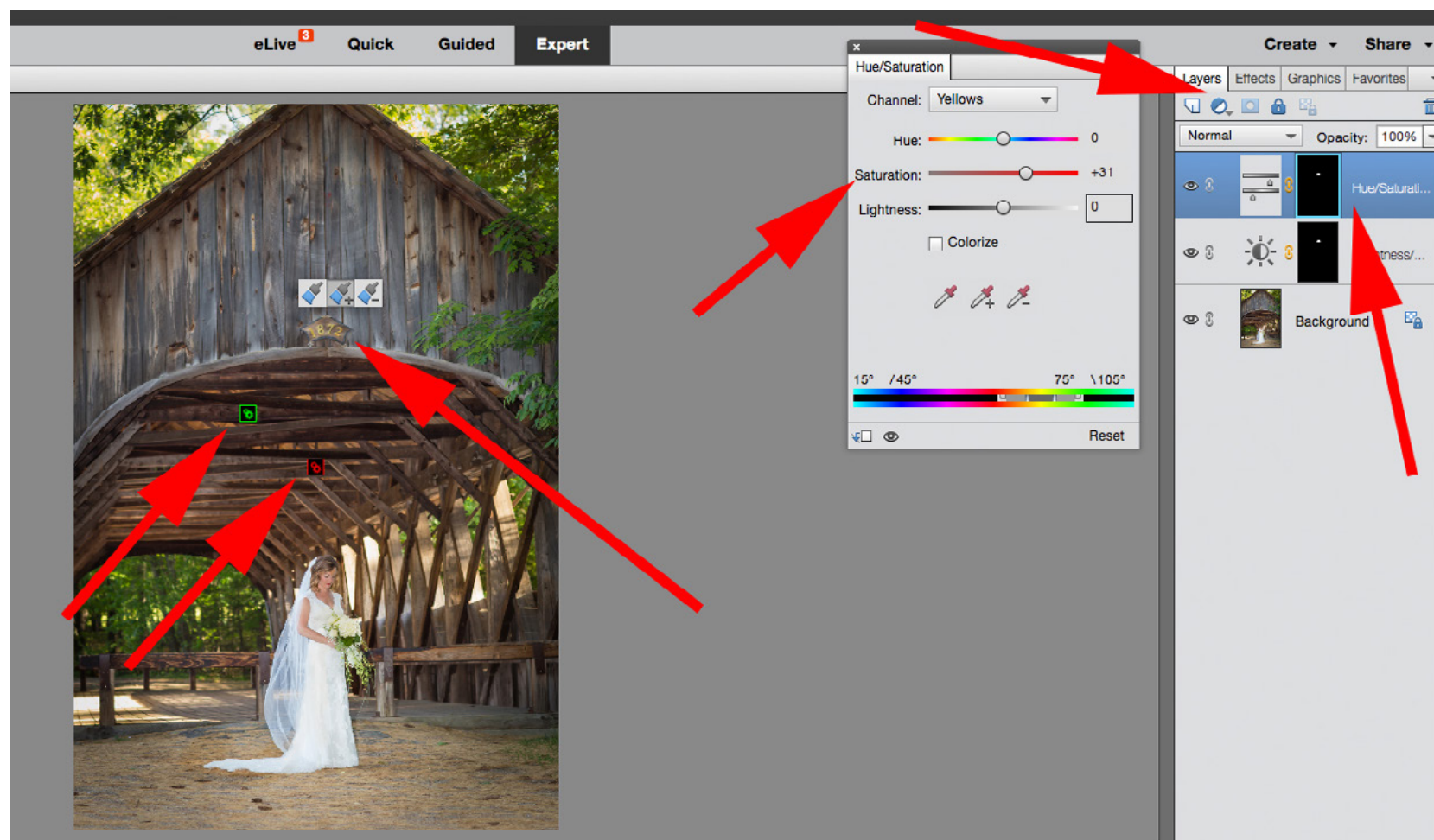


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 131

We are going to adjust the Yellows saturation within the sign until that 1872 sign just pops off of the bridge. I chose a setting of +31. Again, you should check your work at a 100% Preview and at a full-frame Preview. Did you notice the green and red boxes in the Preview window? Every time you create a new Adjustment Layer with this mask, Elements will assign it a colored box. Clicking on each box cycles through the different layers. When you're working on a small area (like our sign), those boxes might get crowded and cover up your work (when previewing at the full-frame (fill) view). That's no problem! Just drag them out of the way; it doesn't affect the mask at all.

**THAT IS THE COMPLETION OF
THE Fundamental EDITS LIST IN
ELEMENTS!**

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 through Fourteen?
5. To do localized sharpening with the Smart Brush, what must you do?
6. To create a vignette in Adobe Elements, we must use the _____ drop-down menu.
7. Because the _____ adjustment and the _____ adjustment are missing in the Elements vignette tool, we must go lightly with our settings in order to not make the vignette overly obvious.
8. True or False: In Adobe Elements, we should always use the Auto Haze Removal function.
9. Instead of an Adjustment Brush, Elements has a _____.
10. Name two ways that you can tell which Adjustment layer is active in Adobe Elements.

ADOBE ELEMENTS BONUS MATERIAL!

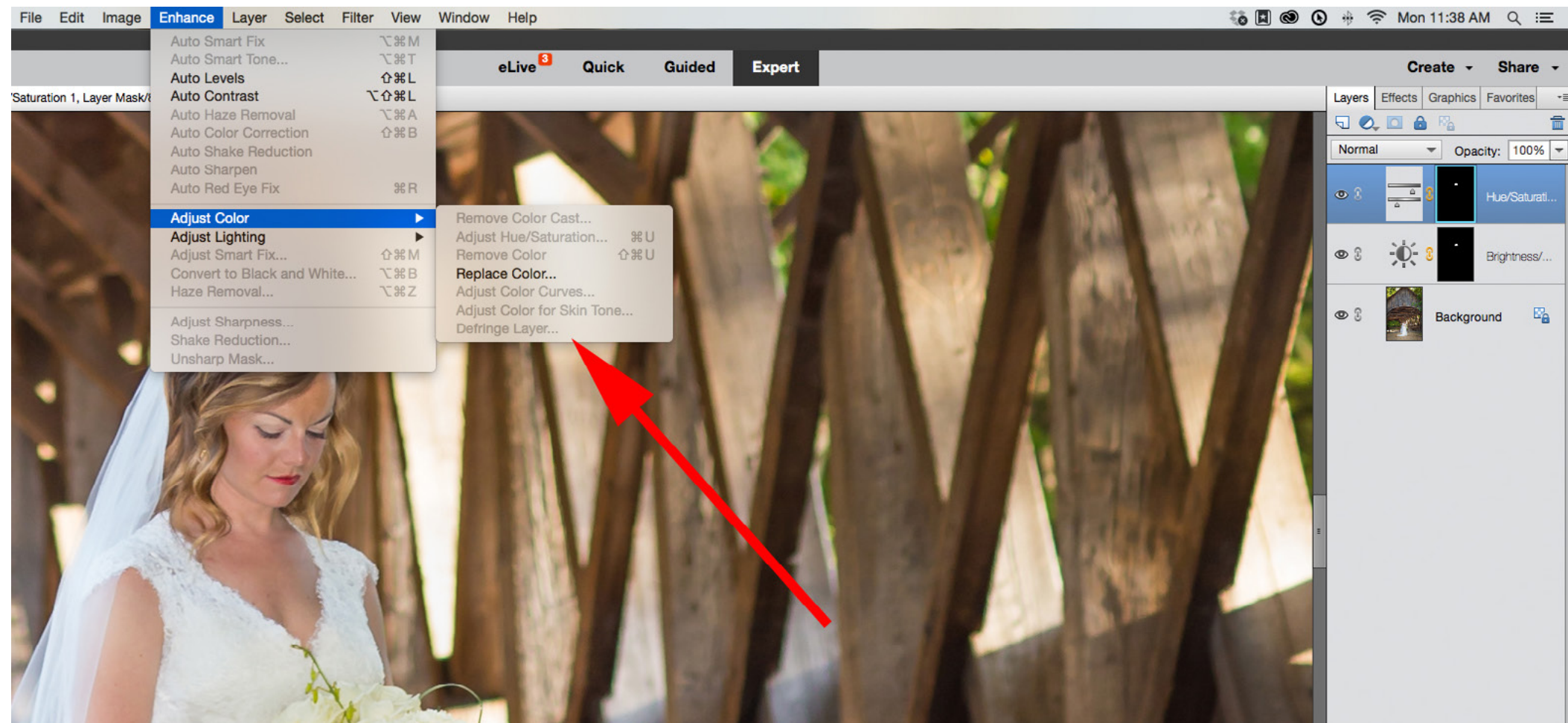


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 132

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 straight forward to fix this problem in Elements. However, it can be done.

In poking around your Elements program you may have noticed that under the “Enhance” drop-down 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 fringing. This function is a completely different issue, which we will discuss in a later guide.

Step One

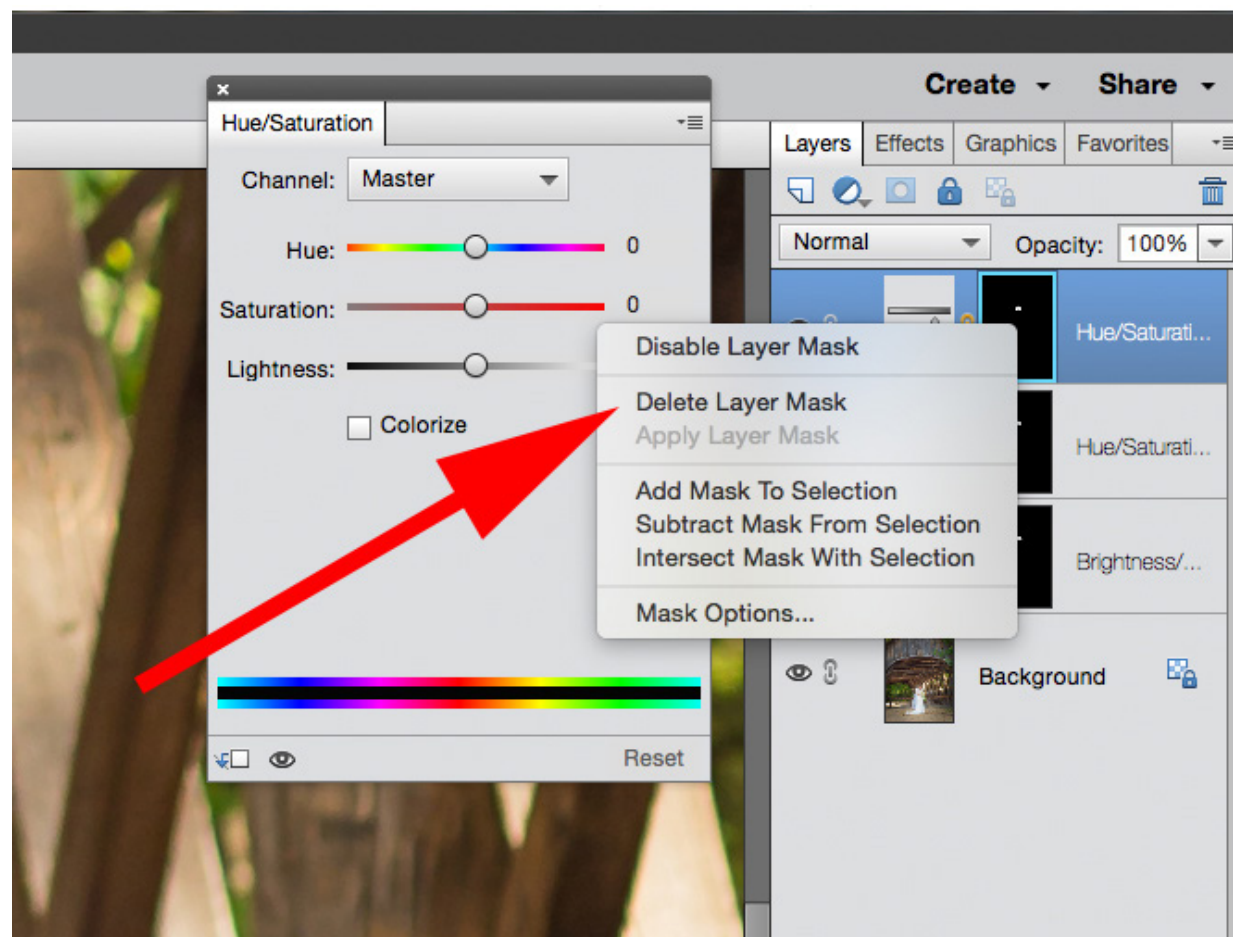


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 133

Go to the Layers tab.

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.

Right click your cursor over the mask and select “Delete Layer Mask.”

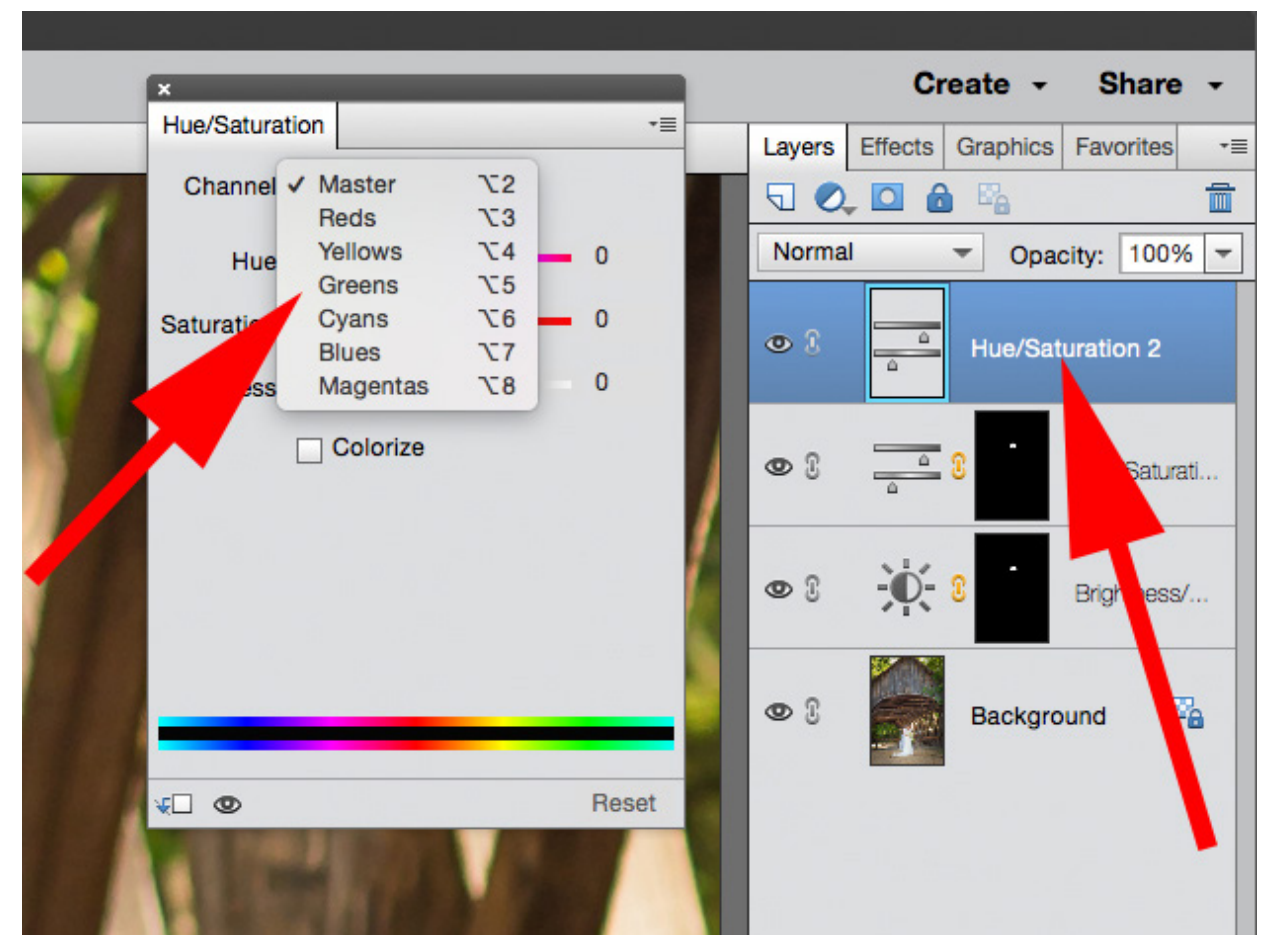


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 134

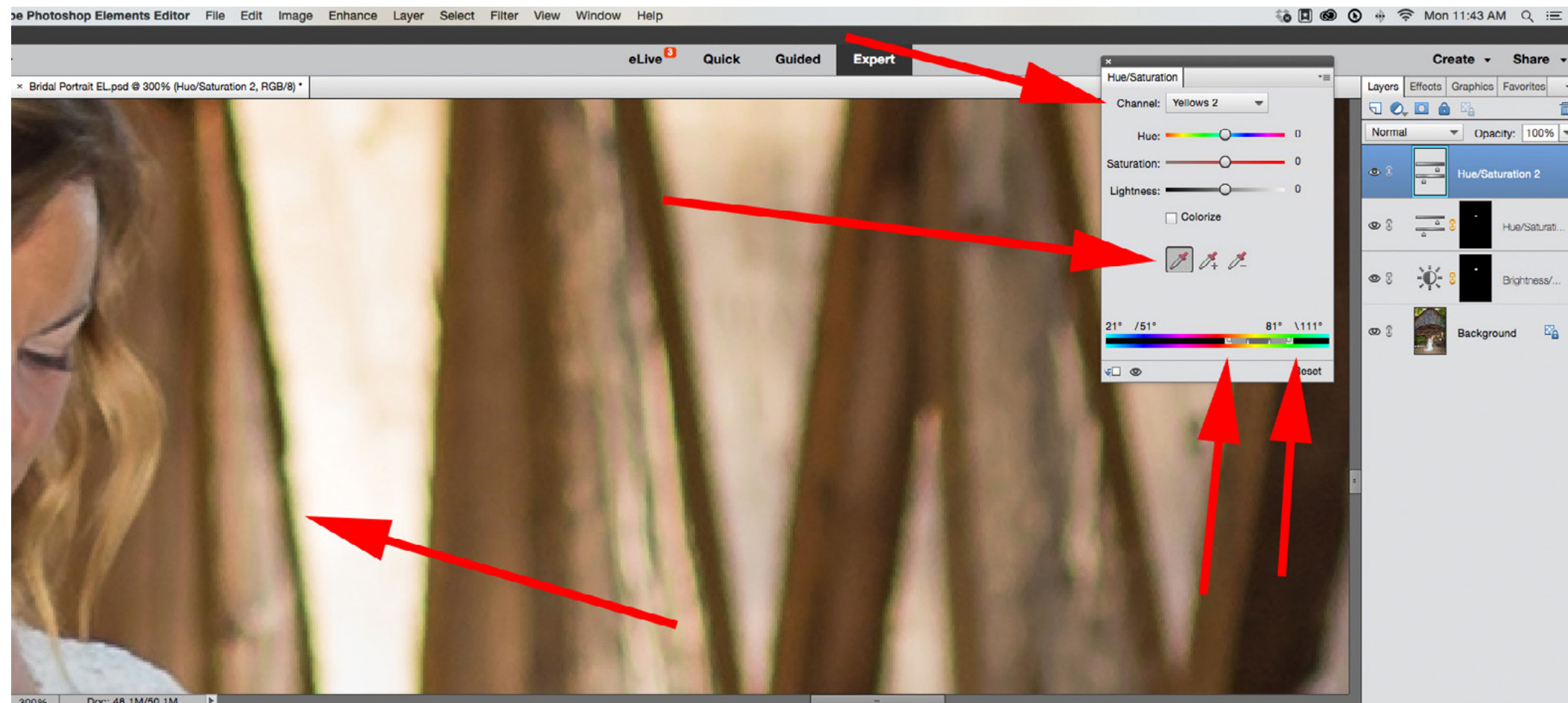


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 135

Make sure that the new Hue/Saturation layer is selected.

In the Hue/Saturation toolbox, click the "Channels" drop-down menu and select "Greens."

Increase the magnification of the Preview image until you can clearly see the color fringe. In this case, I used 300%.

Select the Eyedropper color selection tool.

Click on an area of the color fringe.

Notice that the "Channel" switched to "Yellows 2"; this is because the software detected more yellow than green in the fringe area.

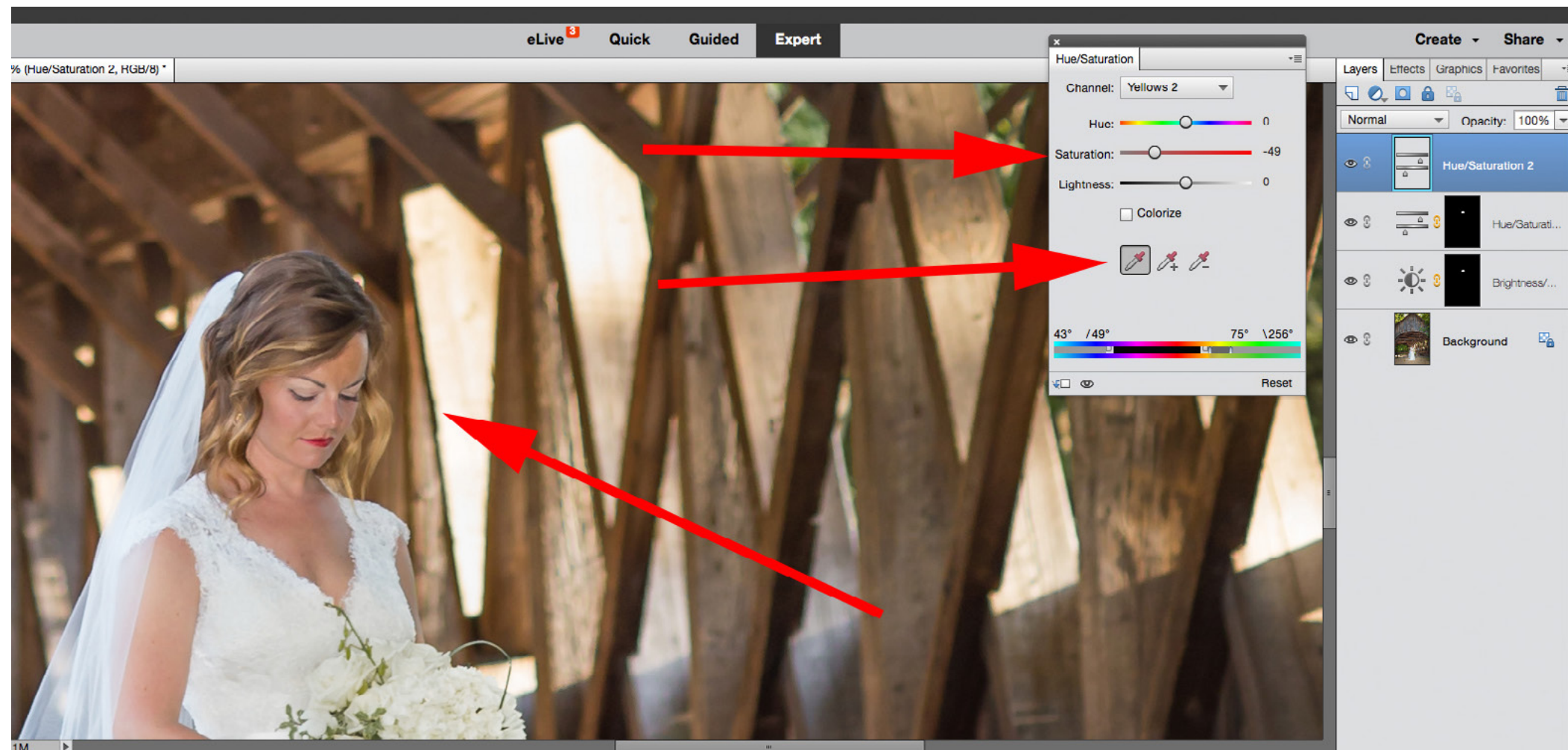


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 136

Notice the two arrows pointing upward in Reference 135. They show the range of colors that are included in the sample that we just took.

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.

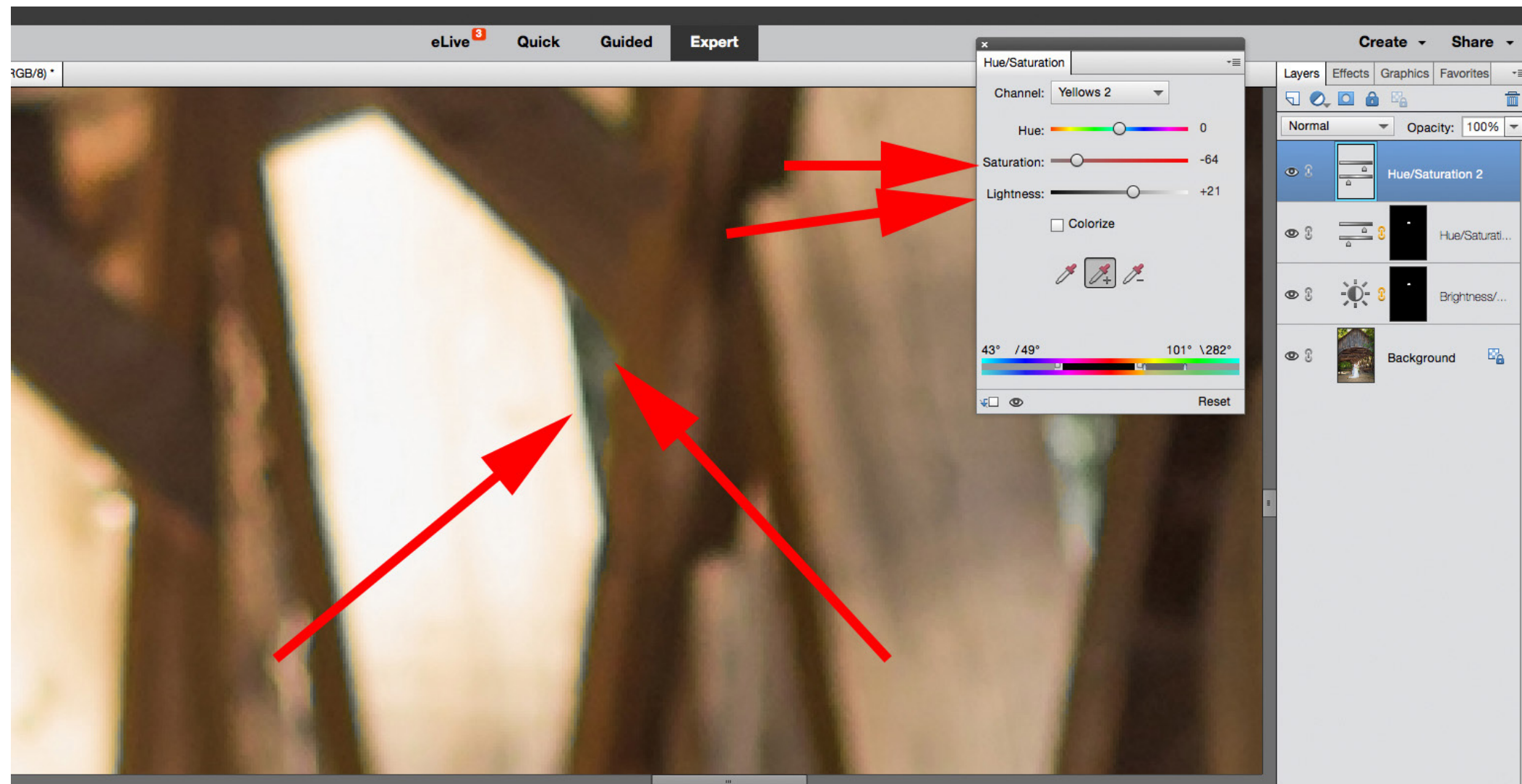


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 137

Scroll around and look for other areas of green fringe. You will find some, just as I did (see the two furthest left arrows in Reference 137).

Click the +Eyedropper, and then click on the additional green fringe.

Adjust the Saturation and Brightness levels until the green fringe disappears.

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.

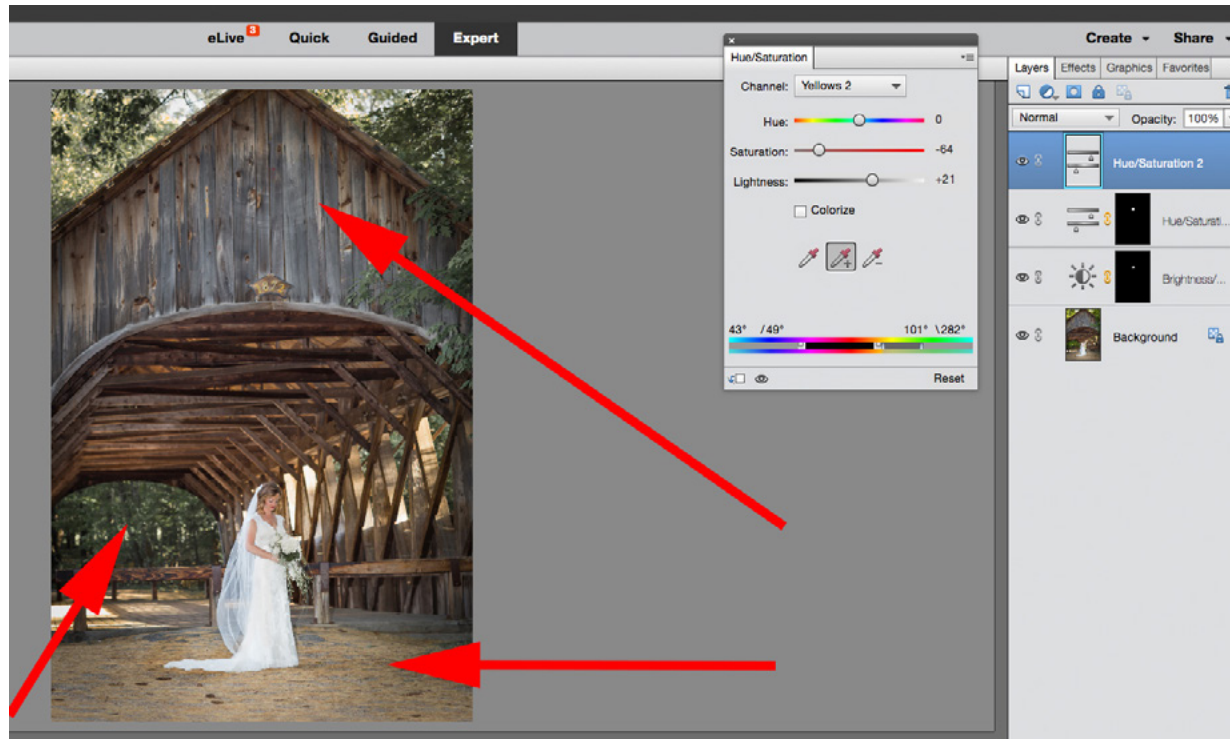


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 138

Using the "Fill" option on the Navigator panel to zoom your image out to a full-frame view.

The first thing you will notice is that your entire image is now lacking in green and yellow saturation. Don't worry!

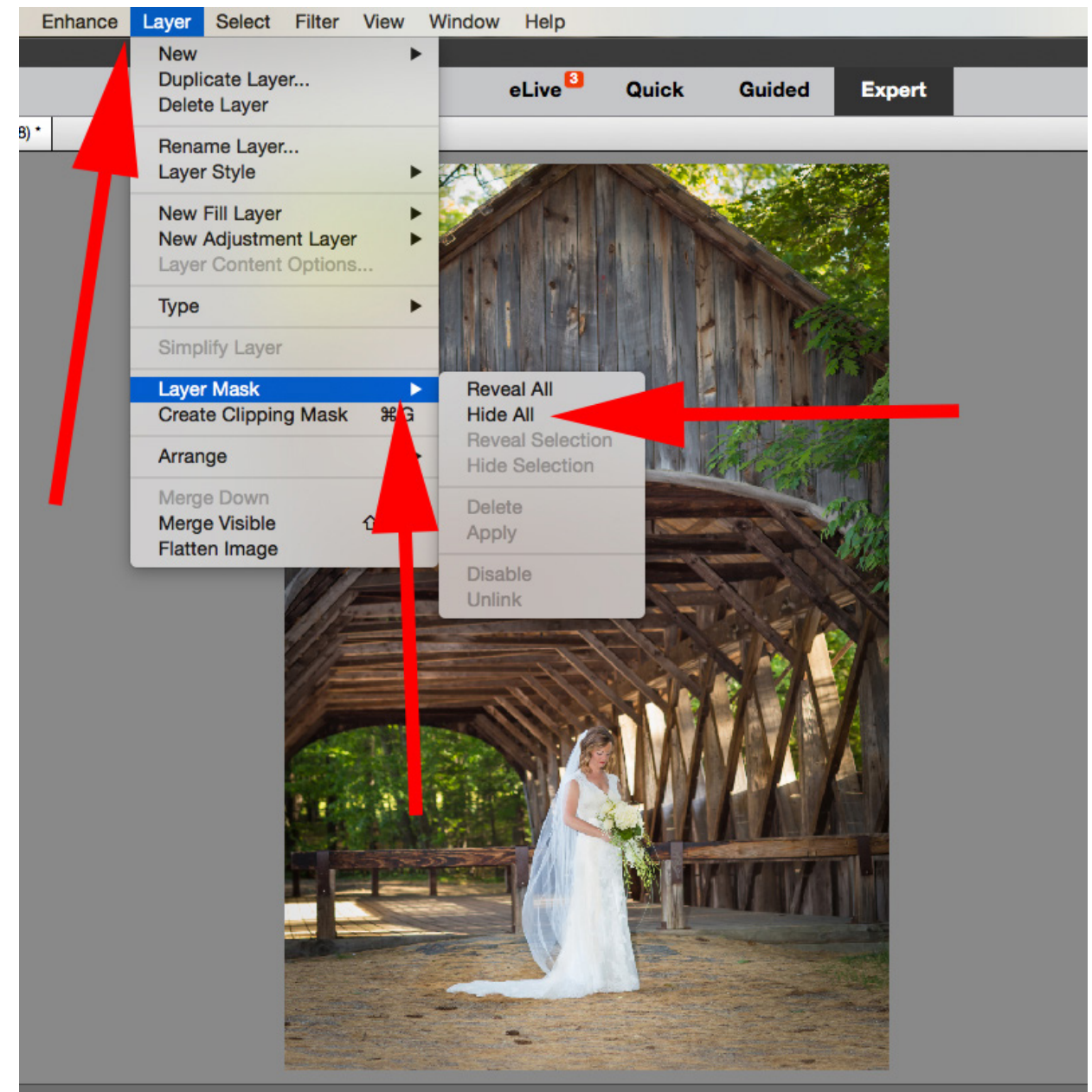


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 139

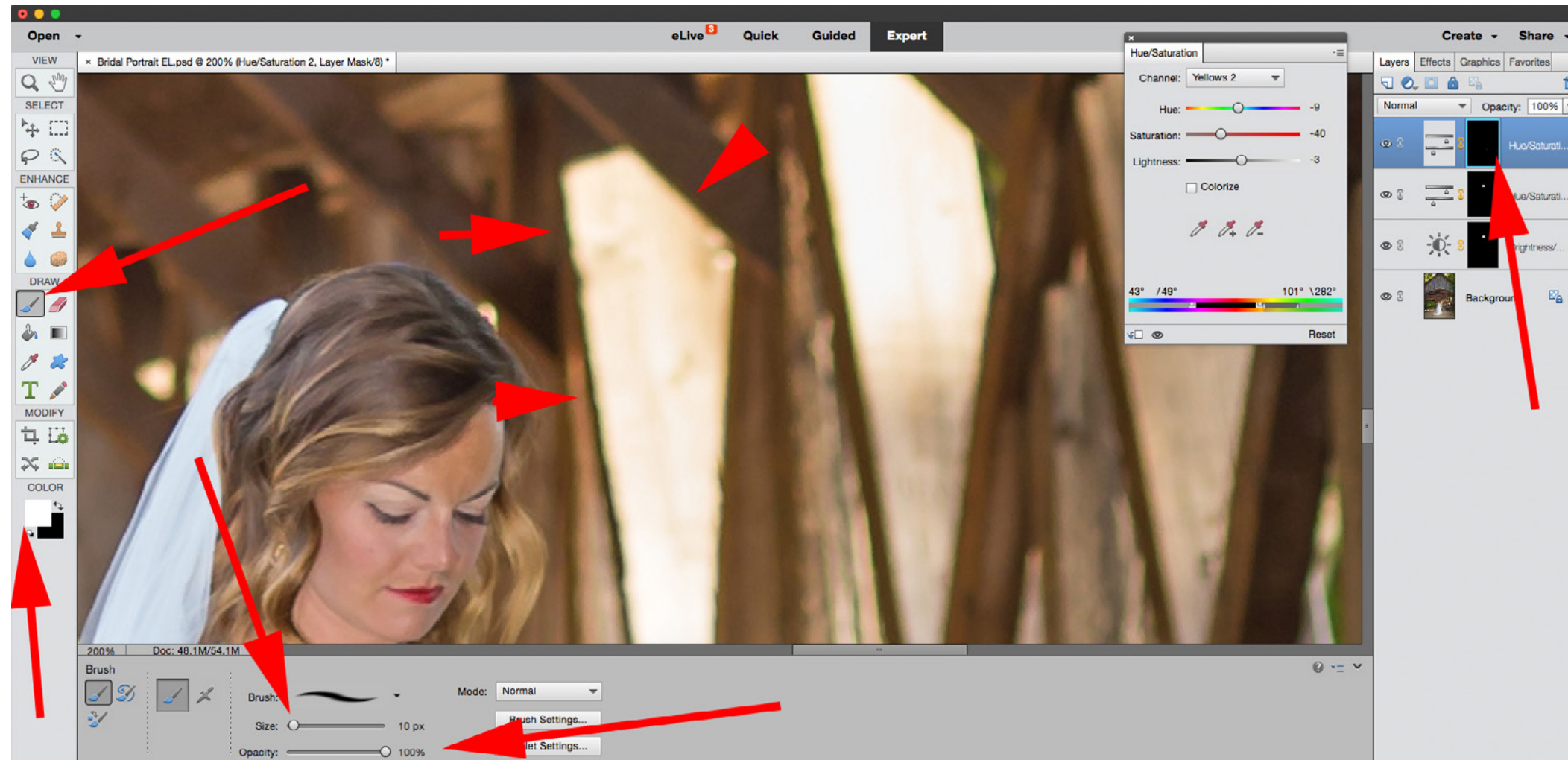


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 140

Make sure that 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" drop-down menu at the top of the workspace.

Click on "Layer Mask."

Click on "Hide All."

The effect of our Hue/Saturation layer will now disappear from the entire photograph. It's being "Hidden."

Check your layer. (See Reference 140, the far right arrow.) The layer should be highlighted. It should have a 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 just barely covers the area displaying the green fringe.

If you click on the “Brush Settings,” a dialog box opens up. The setting we are worried about is the “Hardness.” Set the Hardness to 25%.

Looking at the lower left (in the Brush Settings) and make sure you’re on the Brush Tool and 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.

The three small arrows (to the right of the bride in Reference 140) show you where I have already traced along the green fringe with my Brush Tool. Notice how the green fringe has disappeared.

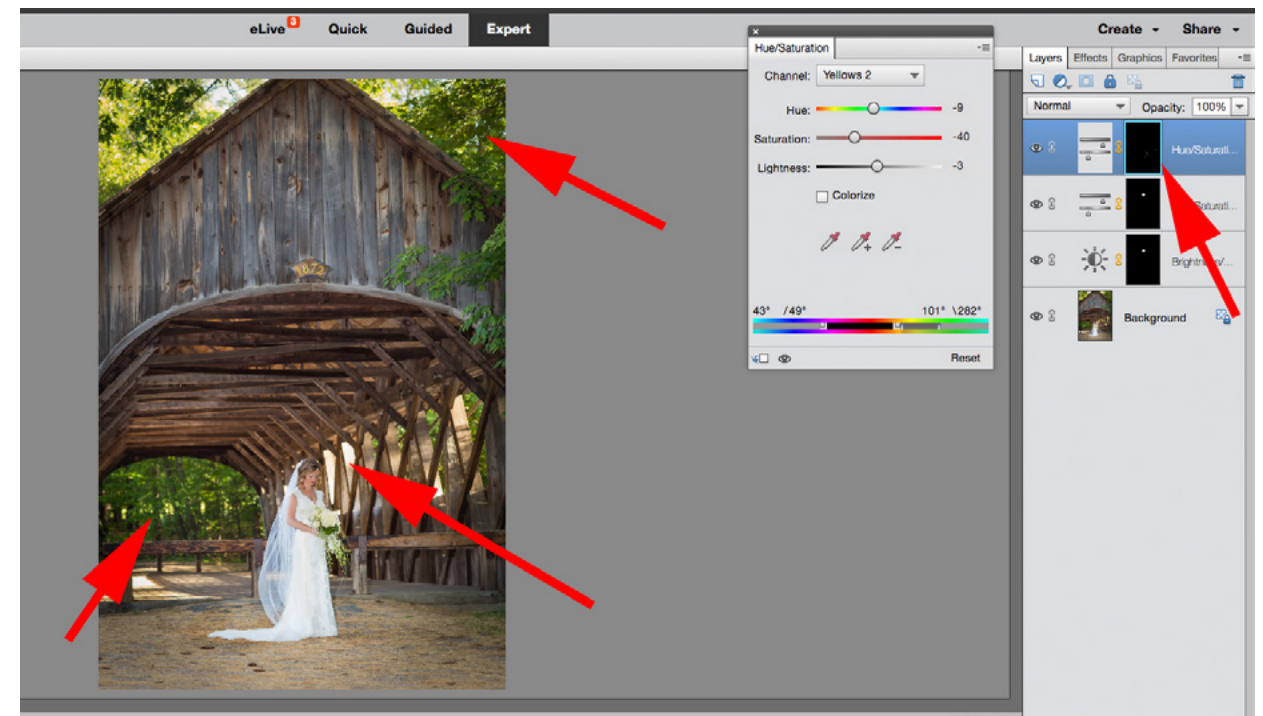


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 141

Return your Preview image to “Fill” or full-frame. Notice the following:

All of your greens and yellows have returned, with the exception of where the green fringe had been located.

The Black Mask 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!).



Photography by Kent DuFault - Image 141a

This is our final image using Adobe Elements as the editing program.

Saving the Image!

I have a recommendation for Adobe Elements users. Save your file in two different formats.

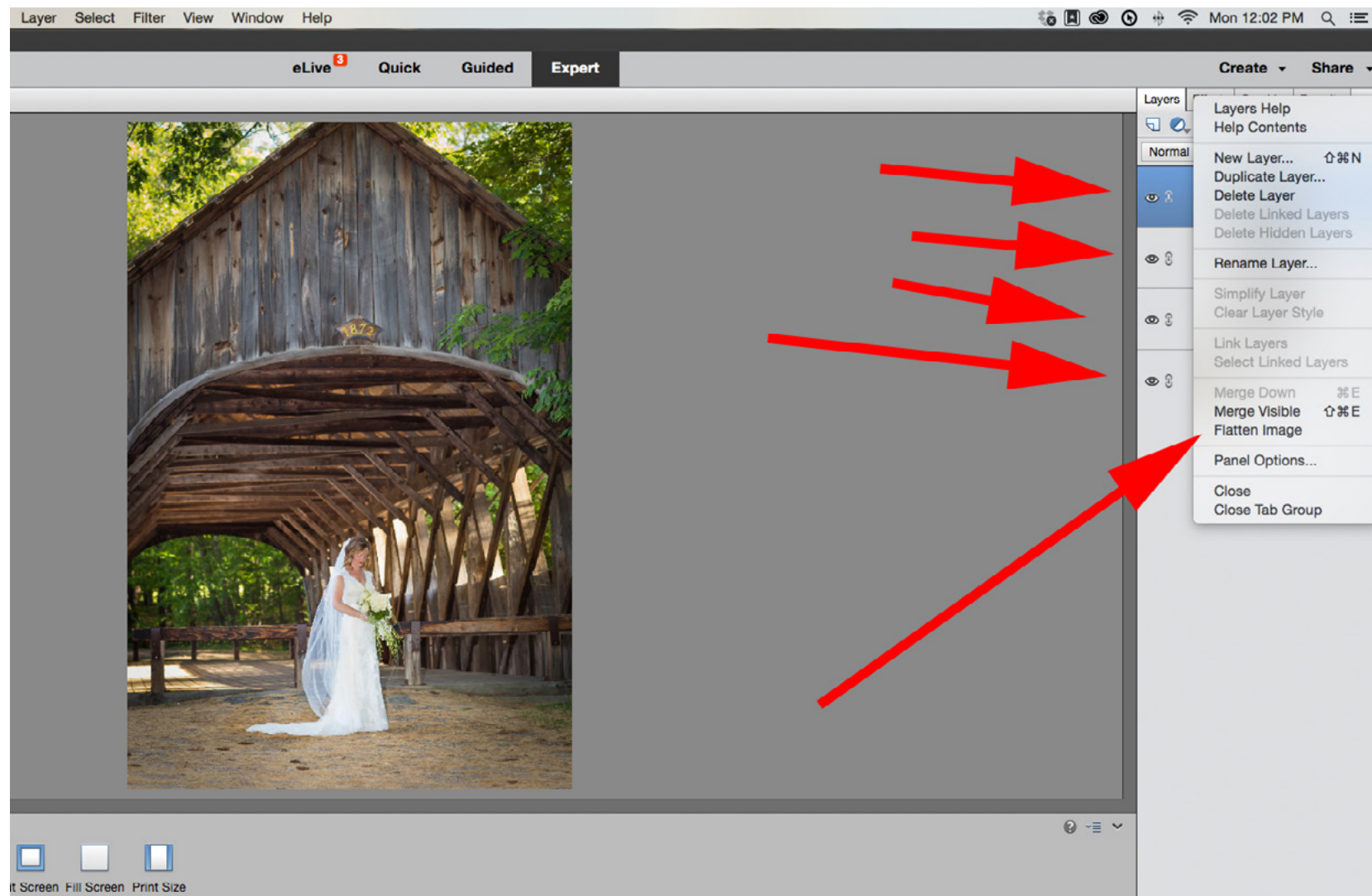


Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 142

First, save your file in a .PSD format keeping all of your layers intact. Since we had to do quite a bit of work within the Elements program (not in the Camera Raw Processing Window), this is the best method for allowing yourself the option of changing your mind on your editing at a later date.

However, to put your image to use, you'll likely need it in a universally accepted format such as .jpeg.

Select the Layers tab.

Select the Layers Menu located in the upper-right corner.

Select "Flatten Image."

You can now save your photograph as a .jpeg file.

FINAL



Photoshop



Lightroom

Illustration by Kent DuFault - Reference 143



Elements



Reference 143 shows the three final images compared.

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

- [Understanding Post-Processing](#)
- [Powerful Imagery](#)
- [Better Black and White - The Guide to Black and White Post-Processing](#)

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