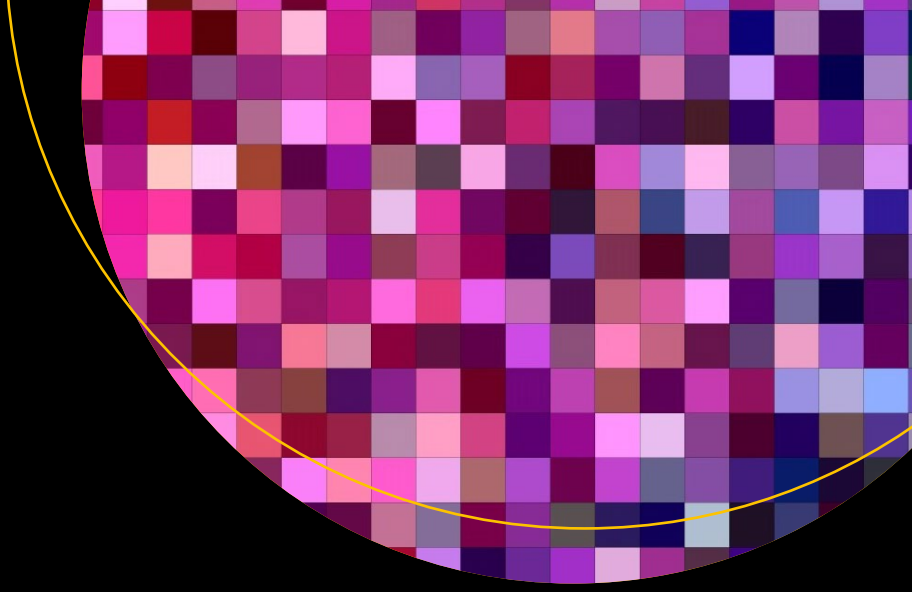

Beginning Pixlr Editor

Learn to Edit Digital Photos Using this Free Web-Based App

Phillip Whitt

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Beginning Pixlr Editor: Learn to Edit Digital Photos Using this Free Web-Based App

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Columbus, Georgia, USA

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This book is dedicated to
my lovely wife Sally and my wonderful daughter Myra.

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About the Author

Phillip Whitt has a passion for images and has been involved with digital image editing and graphic design since the 1990s. As a freelance photo editing/restoration and graphic design professional, he has retouched and restored countless photographs.

Mr. Whitt holds an *ExpertRating* certification in Adobe Photoshop CS, as well as a number of other certifications for demonstrating proficiency in open source software titles such as GIMP 2.6 and Scribus. Mr. Whitt is the author of several Apress titles such as *Beginning Photo Retouching and Restoration Using GIMP, Pro Freeware and Open Source Solutions for Business*, and *Pro Colorizing With GIMP*.

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank Natalie Pao for providing me the opportunity to write this book, and for her generous and gracious assistance. Ms. Pao is indeed a first-rate professional. Without her vision, this book may not have come into being.

I'd also like to thank Jessica Vakili for her assistance during the writing process. I threw lots of questions at her, but she never failed to reply in a pleasant, professional manner.

Introduction

For those seeking an image editing application with broad capabilities, but don't require an "industrial strength" (not to mention expensive) solution, Pixlr Editor is the ideal choice.

A huge benefit this program offers is that it's free! There are no discs or downloads to purchase, nor are there any subscriptions that must be purchased month after month (or year after year, for that matter).

Aside from being free to use, Pixlr Editor offers the perfect balance of convenience and power. Because it's browser-based, it's easy to launch from any computer with at least 2GB of RAM and a reliable Internet connection. There's nothing to download, so just launch it and you're ready to go. Pixlr Editor is easy to use for minor image editing tasks, yet powerful enough to handle more complex work.

Pixlr Express is a lightweight web-based application designed primarily for performing basic editing tasks and applying effects to images. If you'd like to try this easy-to-use editor, visit https://pixlr.com/express/.

Who This Book Is For

This book is for anyone with little to no image editing experience seeking a robust application without a high price tag (or an extremely steep learning curve). It's for the family archivist who wants to digitally retouch and restore old family photos. It's for budding digital photographers who want to improve the quality of the images they capture. It's for the small business owner who needs to edit images for digital marketing materials or company publications.

I believe this book can be especially useful to art and photography teachers with the desire to introduce students to entry level image editing. For some of these educators, teaching digital image editing may now be out of the question because of school budget issues. They are often too tight to allow software subscriptions or purchases.

Because Pixlr Editor is free to use, this could be a game-changer for those teachers. This program works on any platform (Windows, Mac OS, or Linux/UNIX) that has an up-to-date browser, sufficient RAM, and a reliable Internet connection.

It should be noted that toward the end of this book's production, Pixlr Editor was acquired by 123RF from Autodesk. According to the acquisition announcement, Pixlr Editor will revised and updated on an ongoing basis.

To keep this book as up to date as possible, a supplemental PDF titled *Beginning Pixlr Editor Updates* can be obtained from the Source Code/Downloads tab from this Apress page: http://www.apress.com/9781484226971.

It will be revised as needed every few weeks.

How This Book Is Structured

This book is written for primarily for novices. For the totally uninitiated, there are supplemental aids included as downloadable PDF documents, as well as practice JPEG and PXD (the native Pixlr format) images. The supplemental learning materials are included for the benefit of beginners with no experience in image editing. *The Tools Tryout Guide and Practice Images* provides instructions for hands-on learning in the use of each tool. The Beginner's Guide to Layers will get beginners familiar with the various roles layers play in image editing.

Part I of this book acquaints readers with topics such as the launch screen, the workspace, palettes, the menu bar, and various tools (to name a few). Part II contains 25 step-by-step tutorials spanning Chapters 4 through 10.

For those readers who are busy teachers, there are chapter tests and an answer key available for download as PDF documents, which you can administer to your students (saving you the time and hassle of preparing tests yourself).

■ **Note** Pixlr Editor is quite similar to Adobe Photoshop in many of its core functions. For students who will study image editing after high school (and because taking Photoshop classes will most likely be required), many of the skills acquired learning Pixlr Editor will be very useful and will help reduce the learning curve in learning Photoshop.

All of the downloadable supplemental material, tests, answer key, and practice images can be can be obtained from the Source Code/Downloads tab from this Apress page: http://www.apress.com/9781484226971.

Macintosh Users

The tutorials in this book use the Windows (and Linux/UNIX) keyboard shortcuts. If you are a Macintosh user, the Mac equivalents of these Windows counterparts are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Mac/Windows Keyboard Shortcuts Equivalents*

Function	Mac OS	Windows
Cut to Clipboard	Command+X	Control+X
Copy to Clipboard	Command+C	Control+C
Paste from Clipboard	Command+V	Control+V
Undo	Command+Z	Control+Z
Redo	Command+Y	Control+Y
Free Transform	Command+T	Control+T
Select All	Command+A	Control+A
Deselect All	Command+D	Control+D
Contextual Menus	Control-click	Right-click
Print	Command+P	Control+P
Define Brush	Command+K	Control+K

Improving with Practice

The tutorials in this book help you learn a great deal about photo editing; they provide step-by-step instructions to help you get acquainted with the mechanics of Pixlr Editor, as well as image editing basics. It's a good idea to use Pixlr Editor on a regular basis to hone the skills that you learn from studying this book. Just like any other skill, to get good at it takes a lot of practice. Old family photos with minor damage can provide you with a great deal of practice, and you'll help preserve your family history in the bargain.

If you like creating graphics, it's possible to spend countless hours creating raster illustrations using Pixlr Editor. If you've never done any image editing before, you might just find it to be so much fun you can't pull yourself away!

PART I

Getting to Know Pixlr Editor

CHAPTER 1

An Overview of Pixlr Editor

This chapter covers several basic but important aspects of Pixlr Editor that will be especially useful for those new to image editing. This chapter covers the following topics:

- *Launching Pixlr Editor*: In this section, we'll take a look at launching the application for the first time.
- *The Pixlr Editor Workspace*: This part essentially provides an overall look at the interface and where all of the tools and functions in Pixlr Editor are located.
- *Pixel-Based Images Explained*: Pixlr Editor works with pixel-based (or raster) images, which will be covered in this portion.
- *File Formats*: In this section, we'll take a look at the types of file formats Pixlr Editor can open and save, as well as the differences between them.
- *Opening Images*: This part provides guidance in how to open images in Pixlr Editor.
- *Saving Images*: Shows where to save your images, and the file format options available to save them as.

Note If you're new to image editing, I suggest following along on your computer after launching Pixlr Editor to become better acquainted with the start screen, workspace, and opening/saving files.

Launching Pixlr Editor

The fact that Pixlr Editor works in web browsers makes it very convenient to access and simple to launch. However, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- The Adobe Flash plug-in must be installed on your system for the application to work. It's highly likely that it's already on your computer, but if it's not, you can get it free by following this link: `https://helpx.adobe.com/flash-player.html`.

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- A fast, reliable Internet connection is required.
- Pixlr Editor works in most web browsers, but it may not work in older, outdated versions. For best results, make sure you have the latest version installed on your system.
- Your computer should have sufficient RAM installed (I suggest a minimum of 2GB).

There's more than one path to launch the application, but the most direct way is to use the following URL: `https://pixlr.com/editor/`. The application interface will launch, displaying a start screen with options to create or open images (Figure 1-1).

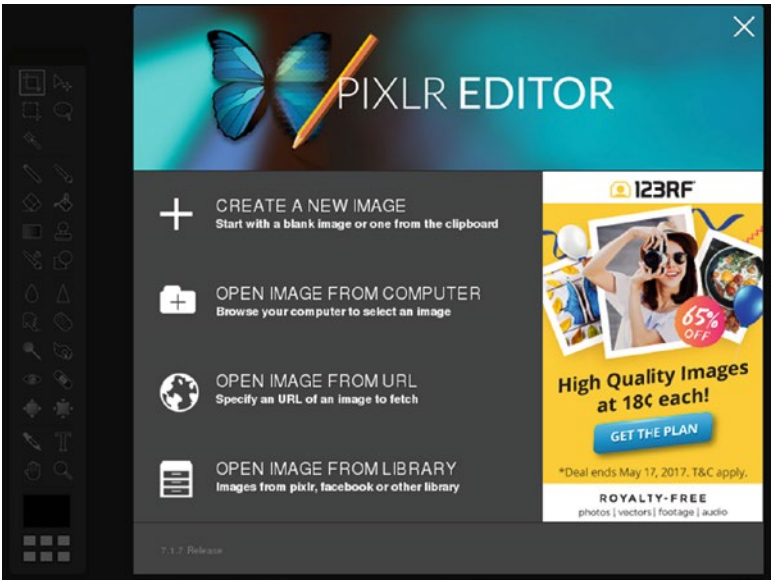

Figure 1-1. *The Pixlr Editor start screen*

We'll take a closer look at the start screen a little later in this chapter, but for now (if you're following along on your computer) close it out by clicking the white X in the upper-right corner of the butterfly graphic. This will allow an unobstructed view of the workspace.

The Pixlr Editor Workspace

Now, let's become better acquainted with the Pixlr Editor workspace—we'll just take a quick tour in this section for now, but topics such as tools, the menu bar, etc., will be explored in greater depth in later chapters. Figure 1-2 shows the Pixlr Editor workspace and identifies the main parts.

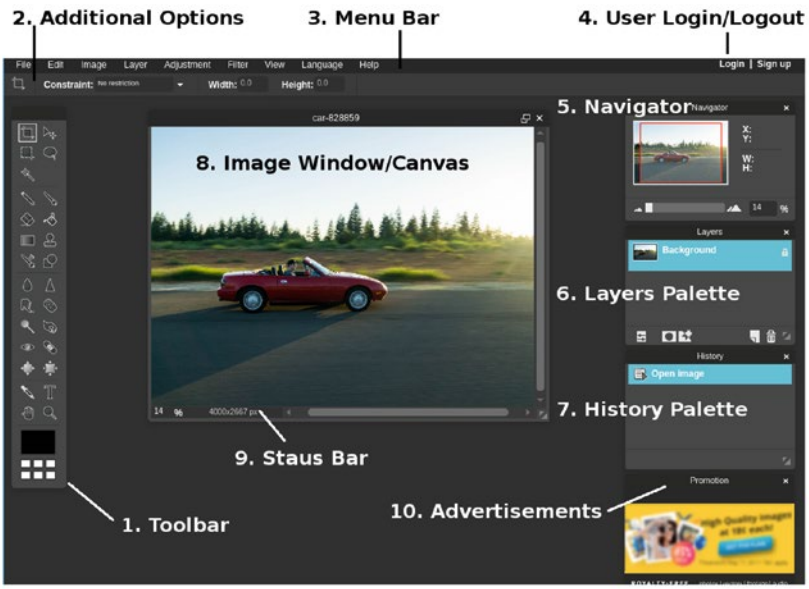

Figure 1-2. *The Pixlr Editor workspace*

Here's a quick breakdown of the Pixlr Editor workspace:

1. **The Toolbar—**This palette contains the digital tools you'll work with. There are tools for making selections, applying colors, erasing portions of an image, etc. Because there are so many, each tool will be examined more closely in Chapter 2.

2. **Additional Options—**Most tools can be configured as needed. For example, you can adjust the diameter, shape, opacity, and flow of the brush tools. Not all tools have additional options.

3. **The Menu Bar—**The menu bar contains a sundry of functions for image editing. You'll find commands for opening and saving images, adjusting images, applying filters for effects, and much more. There are many functions contained in the menu bar, all of which will be examined more closely in Chapter 3.

4. **User Login/Logout and User Settings—**After creating a Pixlr account, this area is where you can log in or out, as well as update your account information.

■ **Note** Creating a Pixlr account is free, and you are not required to submit any sensitive personal information. Pixlr Editor can be used without an account, but you won't be able to save images to the Pixlr Library, only to your computer (or an external storage such as a flash drive).

---

5. **The Navigator Palette—**This feature helps you find your way around the image at close magnification (Figure 1-3).

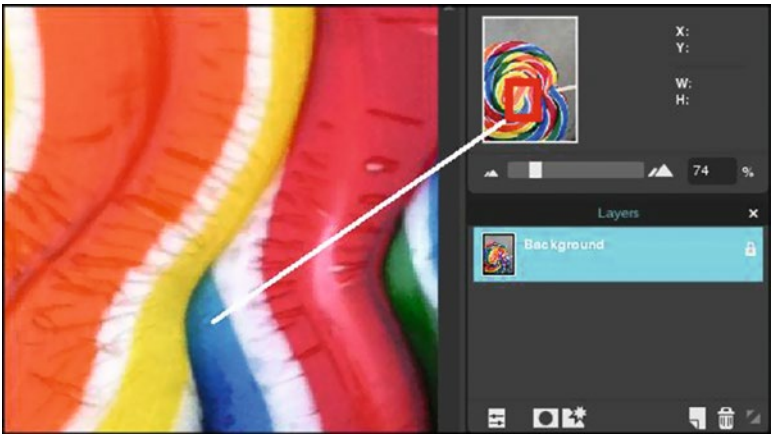

Figure 1-3. *The Navigator Palette*

6. **The Layers Palette—**This is one of the areas where you'll work with layers (you can also access them from the menu bar to some extent). The Layers Palette displays a thumbnail image of each layer (Figure 1-4). Each layer can be named, be re-ordered in the stack, the opacity lowered, deleted, etc.

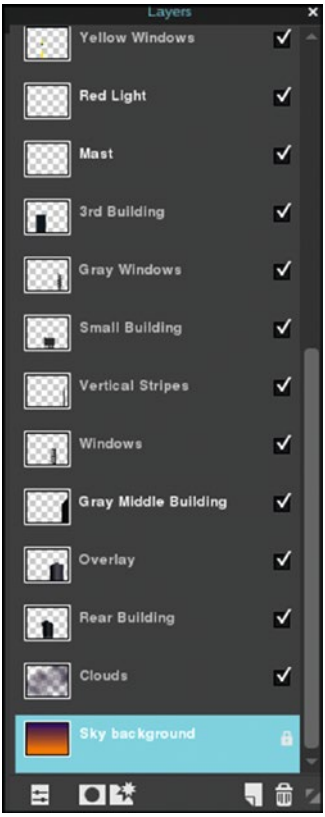

Figure 1-4. *The Layers Palette helps manage layers*

■ **Note** If you're a complete beginner to image editing, layers can be thought of as clear sheets that contain a graphical element. When stacked one on top of another, they combine to form a complete image. To learn more, refer to the *The Beginner's Guide to Layers* PDF, which can be obtained from the Source Code/Downloads tab of this Apress page: http://www.apress.com/9781484226971.

---

7. **The History Palette—**When working with Pixlr Editor, a snapshot of each editing step is stored in the History Palette, showing up to 16 actions (Figure 1-5). This allows you revert to an earlier point in the editing process should you find it necessary to revise any previous editing steps or eliminate mistakes.

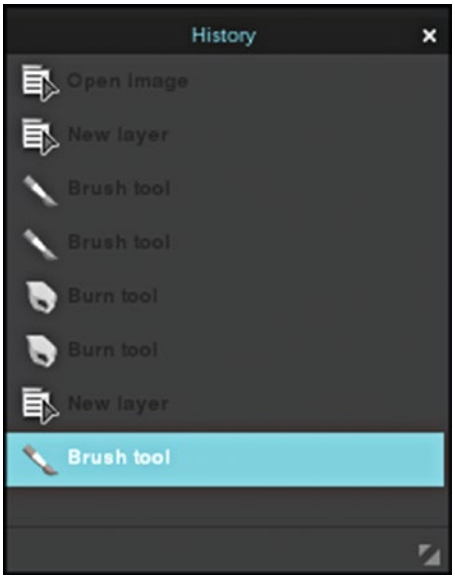

Figure 1-5. *The History Palette allows the user to revert to an earlier point in the editing process*

8. **The Image Window/Canvas—**This is where the image you are working on appears. The image may be a digital photograph or a blank canvas for a graphic design you intend to create.
9. **Status Bar—**This shows the dimensions of the image in pixels, as well as the zoom percentage.
10. **Advertisements—**Because Pixlr Editor is free, it's supported by advertisements. The ad is small, but can be closed if desired.

Pixel-Based Images Explained

Pixel-based images (also known as raster images) are comprised of many tiny squares called *pixels.* A pixel (derived from the term *picture element)* is an individual unit of color and tonal value as represented on a computer display. The color and value of each pixel can vary—when viewed at close magnification, the block-like appearance is obvious (Figure 1-6), but when viewed from a distance the colors and tones appear to gradually and smoothly transition in the image.

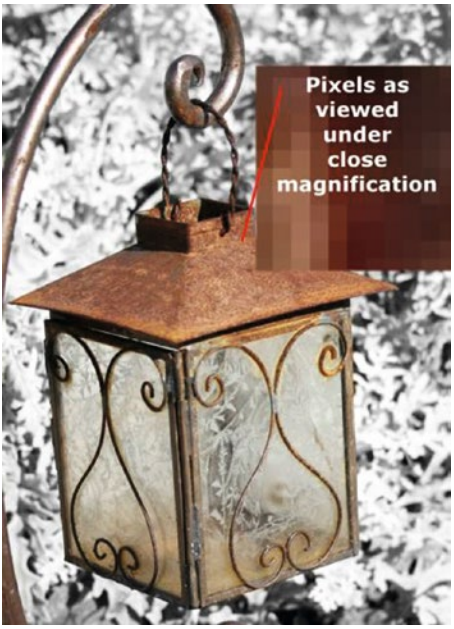

Figure 1-6. *Pixels appear as blocks under close magnification*

As the name suggests, Pixlr Editor is a pixel-based image editing application. This means that images are resolution-dependent. When a digital photo is resized too much, the image quality diminishes. Pixlr Editor is designed to output images for digital/web-based displays, not high-end print such as that one would acquire from a service bureau. However, it is possible to output files as standard-sized photographic prints, provided you start with a high resolution image to edit. This will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 4.

You may have heard the term vector graphics, but aren't sure what it means. Even though they aren't relevant to Pixlr Editor, vector graphics warrant some explanation. Vector graphics are different than raster graphics in the sense that they are created using mathematical formulas to form geometric shapes. Unlike raster graphics, vector graphics are scalable, meaning they can be enlarged or reduced in size with no image degradation.

However, photographs don't generally display well as vector-based images. Whereas pixel-based images such as digital photos show a transition of color and tone, vector graphics are usually composed of areas of solid color (Figure 1-7).

Figure 1-7. *A pixel-based (raster) image and a vector-based image*

In addition to being an advanced photo editing application, Pixlr Editor can also serve as graphics creation tool. However, unlike those created using a vector-based program, graphics created using this program are pixel-based. The illustration of the city scape was created using Pixlr Editor (Figure 1-8).

Figure 1-8. *A pixel-based (raster) illustration created using Pixlr Editor (Copyright 2016 Phillip Whitt)*

Image File Formats

Image file formats are standards for storing digital data as a computer file. Each different file format is best suited for a specific purpose. Pixlr Editor handles a number of image file formats.

Here is a look at the formats Pixlr Editor can work with:

- **PXD (Pixlr Document)**—This is the proprietary file format used by Pixlr Editor and should be used to preserve layers for future editing or revisions of your project. It's good practice to always keep your work saved as a PXD file, then output a copy of the finished of the work in another file format. Pixlr Editor can both open and save files in the PXD format.
- **JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group)**—The JPEG file format is one of the most common file formats in use for digital images. The JPEG format is versatile because it can compress image data for a manageable file size while maintaining good image quality. The JPEG format is known as a *lossy* format. Compressing an image discards image data—if an image is compressed too much, the quality will suffer. Image files saved in the JPEG format are normally used for display on the web. They can also be used for print, as long the resolution is sufficient. Pixlr Editor can open and save JPEG images.
- **GIF (Graphics Interchange Format)**—GIF is another format commonly used on the web. Unlike JPEG files, GIF files can support transparent backgrounds. This file format is often used for simple web animations. Pixlr Editor can open GIF files as flattened, static images, but cannot save images as GIF files.
- **PNG (Portable Network Graphics)**—The PNG image file is a lossless format. This format provides image data compression with little loss of image quality. PNG files are also typically used on the web. Unlike JPEG files, PNG files support transparent backgrounds. Pixlr Editor can open PNG images and save images as PNG files.
- **BMP (Bitmap Image File)**—The BMP is a raster graphics file format that is non-destructive. Images are saved in high quality, but result in large file sizes. Generally, BMP files are better suited for print and not web use. Pixlr Editor can save files in the BMP format, and can open most. However, extremely large BMP files would likely be an exception.
- **TIFF (Tagged Image File Format)**—This is a versatile, widely used format used in the graphics industry. Like BMP, this is a good choice when image quality is important and destined for print rather than web use. Pixlr Editor can save files in the TIFF format as flattened images, but can't open TIFF files.

- **PSD (Photoshop Document)**—This is the default file format used by Adobe Photoshop. PSD files often contain layers utilizing features unique to Photoshop that aren't supported in Pixlr Editor. Therefore, the application's ability to handle some PSD files is limited. Pixlr Editor can open (with limits) PSD files, but can't save image files in the PSD format.

Opening Images

Upon opening Pixlr Editor, the start screen will appear (as you saw earlier in this chapter). There following options are presented in Figure 1-9.

- Create New Image
- Open Image From Computer
- Open Image From URL
- Open Image From Library

Figure 1-9. *The options presented on the start screen*

■ **Note** These options can also be accessed from Pixlr Editor's menu bar under File. We'll look closer at the Create New Image option in Chapter 10.

To open an image from your computer, simply click that option and navigate to the folder containing that image. The example in Figure 1-10 shows that the image I want to open is in a folder titled `Photos to Edit`, which is on the computer's desktop.

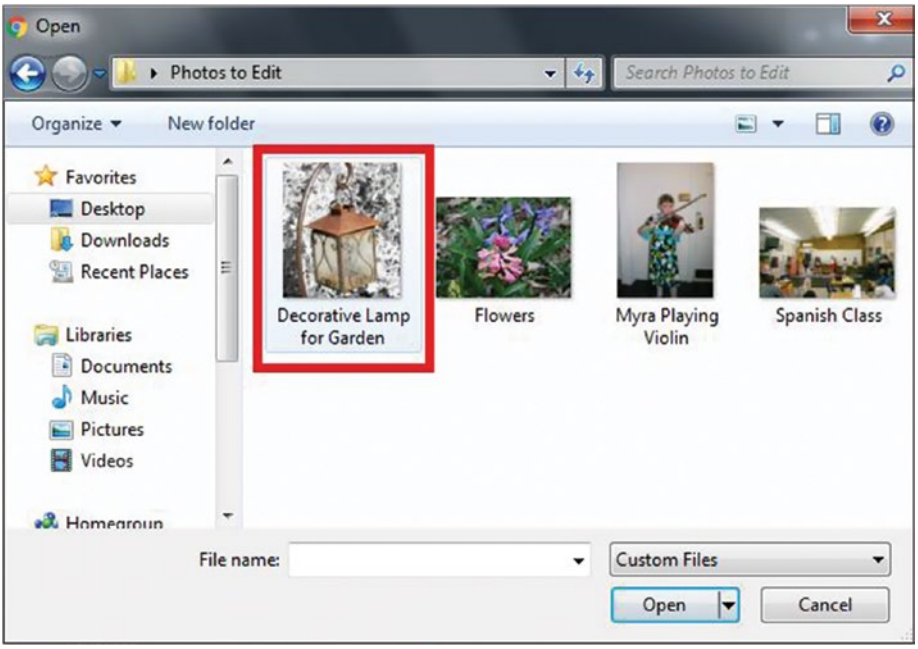

Figure 1-10. *Opening an image contained in a folder on the computer desktop*

To open an image an image from a URL, follow these steps:

1. Click Open Image From URL in the Pixlr Editor start screen.
2. Open a new tab, then navigate to the web page hosting the image you want.
3. Right-click on the image and click Copy Image Address (Figure 1-11).

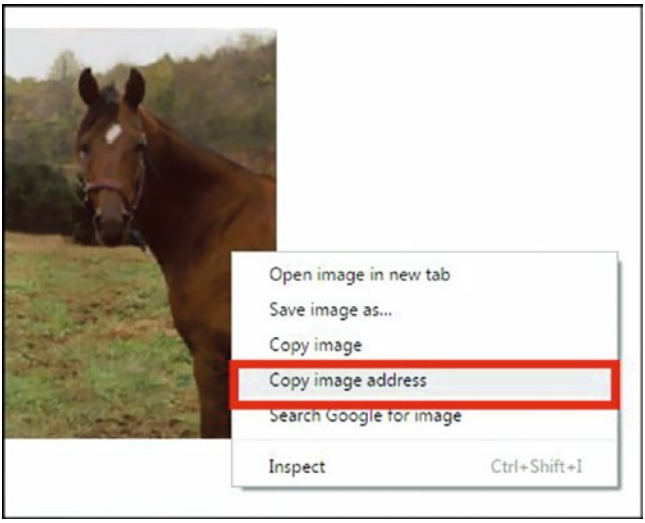

Figure 1-11. *Copy the image address of the image you want to open*

■ **Note** The example shown here is using Google Chrome—the wording in the command may vary depending on the browser being used.

---

4. Click the tab running Pixlr Editor and paste the address in the dialog box (Figure 1-12). Then click OK.

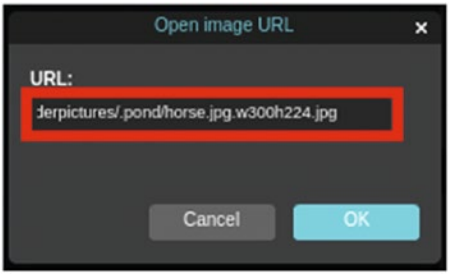

Figure 1-12. *Paste the image address in the dialog box to open in Pixlr Editor*

The image should now be opened in Pixlr Editor, ready to edit, as shown in Figure 1-13.

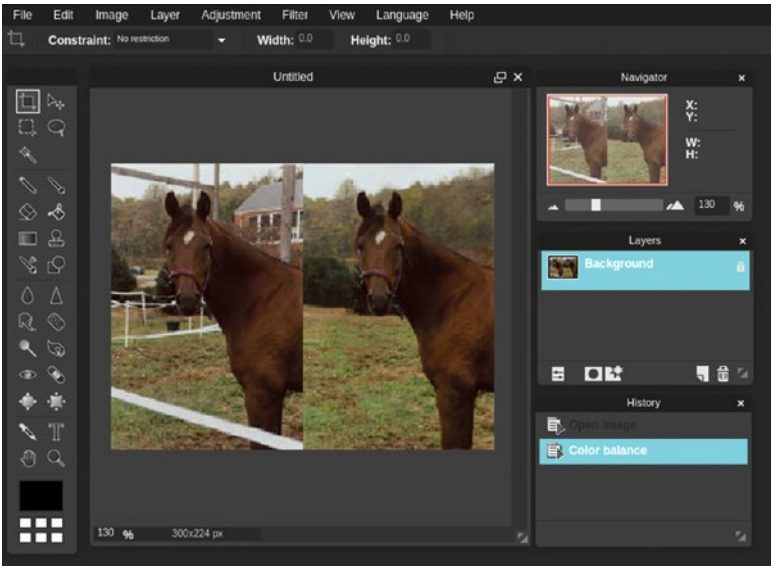

Figure 1-13. *The image now opened in Pixlr Editor*

■ **Note** It's important to remember that images hosted on the web (unless they're in the public domain) are protected by copyright laws. It's always advisable to obtain written permission from the copyright owner before using an image hosted on the Internet for publication.

Saving Images

Pixlr Editor offers two places to save your images—your computer or the Pixlr Library (Figure 1-14).

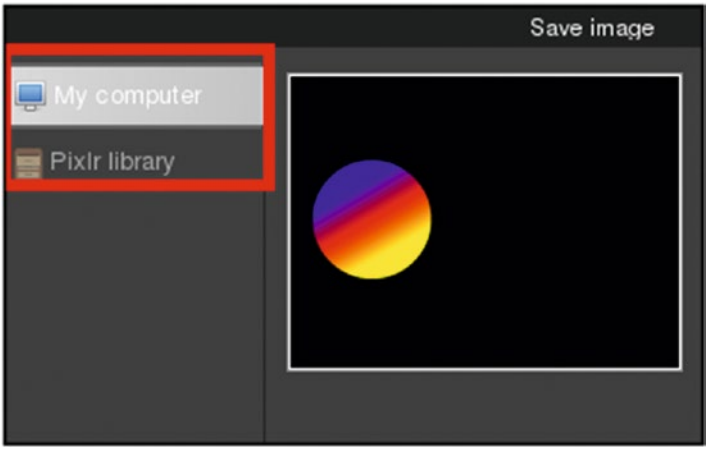

Figure 1-14. *Pixlr Editor can save images to your computer or the Pixlr Library*

A Pixlr account isn't required to use the application and to save images to your computer. Of course, the advantage to having an account is access to the library, thus saving space on your computer. The library can serve as a backup of your work if you save your images to both places after each editing session.

If you prefer not to set up a Pixlr account, you should always back your work up *somewhere*—on a flash drive, external hard drive, or cloud service.

Your images can be saved in the following file formats using Pixlr Editor (Figure 1-15):

- JPEG
- PNG
- BMP
- TIFF
- PXD (Pixlr Editor's native format for using with layered images)

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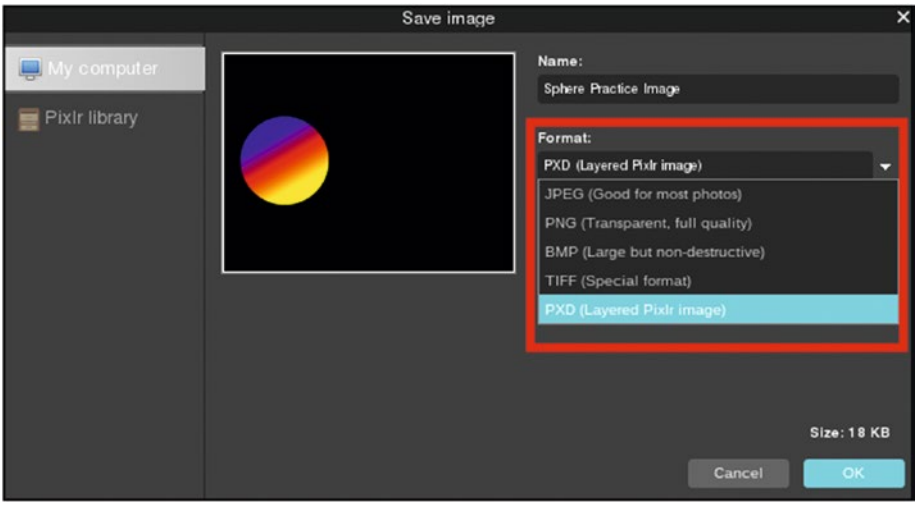

Figure 1-15. *File format options for saving images*

Summary

If you're a beginner at image editing software, hopefully you now have some rudimentary understanding of this program. If you feel lost or overwhelmed, don't worry—things will make more sense the further into this book you go.

This chapter provided an overview of Pixlr Editor—we looked at launching the application, using the workspace, pixel-based images, image file formats, and opening/saving images.

The next chapter includes an in-depth look at the tools used in Pixlr Editor.

CHAPTER 2

Pixlr Editor Tools

This chapter looks at the broad set of tools at your disposal in Pixlr Editor. Here's what you'll learn:

- *The Tool's Purpose and Function*: Each tool's purpose and how it functions is described—an oversized icon representing the tool is shown in each figure to help the reader recognize it by sight on the toolbar.
- *Tool Shortcuts*: Tool keyboard shortcuts use a single alphabetic character and are indicated after the tool's name in parentheses. Once you memorize them, these keyboard shortcuts can dramatically reduce the time spent during an editing session. Tool shortcuts are included in the descriptions where applicable (not all tools have keyboard shortcuts).
- *Tool Options*: Many tools have options available in addition to their default settings. These options are described when applicable (not all tools have them).

Note If you're a complete beginner and would like to try out each tool, there are practice images provided (with instructions on PDF) located in the *Tools Tryout Guide and Practice Images* folder, which can be obtained from the Source Code/Downloads tab from this Apress page: http://www.apress.com/9781484226971.

The Tools and How They Work

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce you to the tools and describe how they work.

You'll be using many of these tools as you work through the tutorials in the second part of this book, Part II, "Working with Images."

We will now take a look at each tool—its name, shortcut, description of its purpose, and additional options.

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Crop Tool (Shortcut: C)

The Crop tool is used for trimming by removing excess image data for image composure (Figure 2-1).

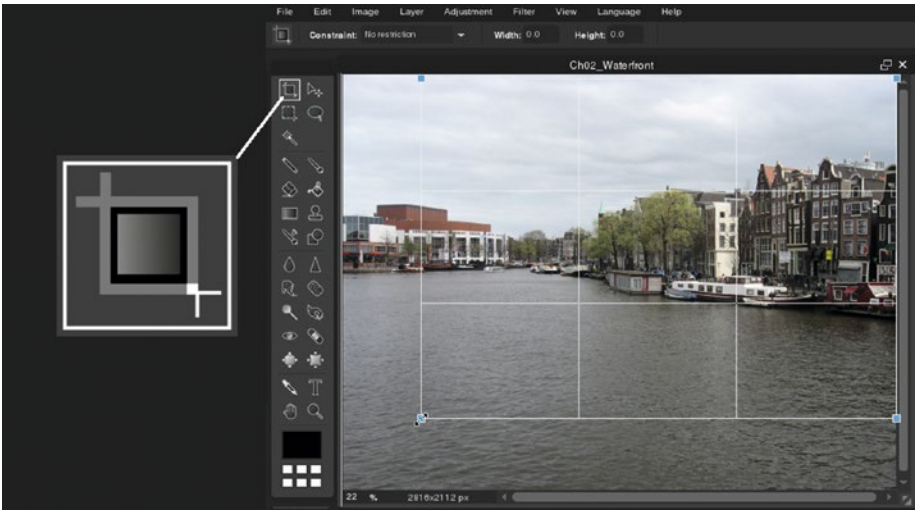

Figure 2-1. *The Crop tool trims away excess image data*

You use this tool by clicking and dragging around the area to be trimmed and then clicking the Crop tool icon. You'll be presented with a Confirm dialog box, prompting you to apply the changes (Figure 2-2).

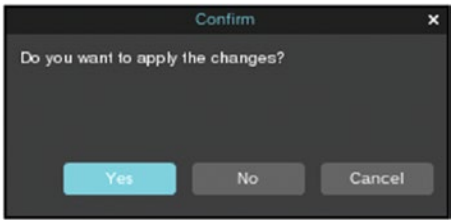

Figure 2-2. *The Crop tool Confirm dialog box*

Alternatively, you can double-click in the image or press Enter to make the change without the prompting the Confirm dialog box.

Additional Options

The Crop tool has three Constraint settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *No Restriction*—The width and height of the crop can be adjusted independently.
- *Aspect Ratio*—Allows the tool to be set as either a perfect square or rectangle whose width remains proportional to the height as the tool is dragged.
- *Output Size*— The overall width and height remain the same after the image is cropped.

Move Tool (Shortcut: V)

The Move tool is used to reposition graphical elements. By clicking on the element and holding the mouse button down, you can move the element anywhere in the image (Figure 2-3).

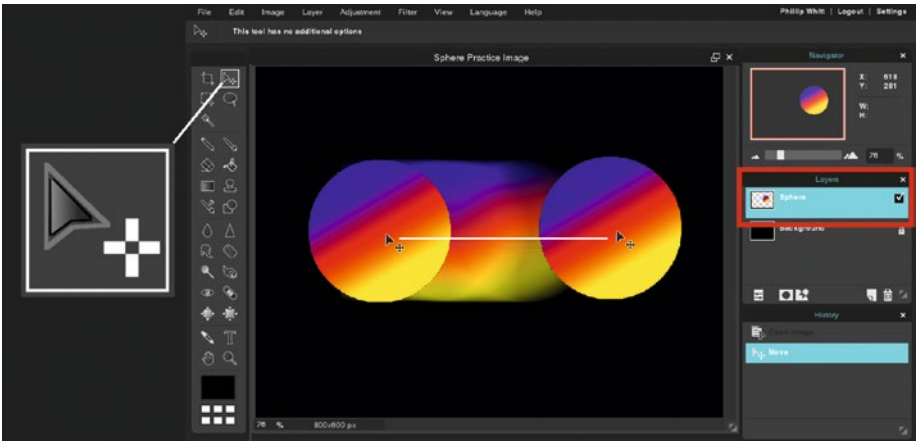

Figure 2-3. *The Move tool is used to reposition graphical elements*

Additional Options

None

Marquee Tool (M)

The Marquee tool is used to make four types of selections—rectangular, square, elliptical, and circular. In Figure 2-4, the Marquee tool is being used to make a rectangular selection around the graphic of a domino. The boundary is defined by dashed lines that appear to move around the selected area like "marching ants" (a term commonly used in the graphic design world).

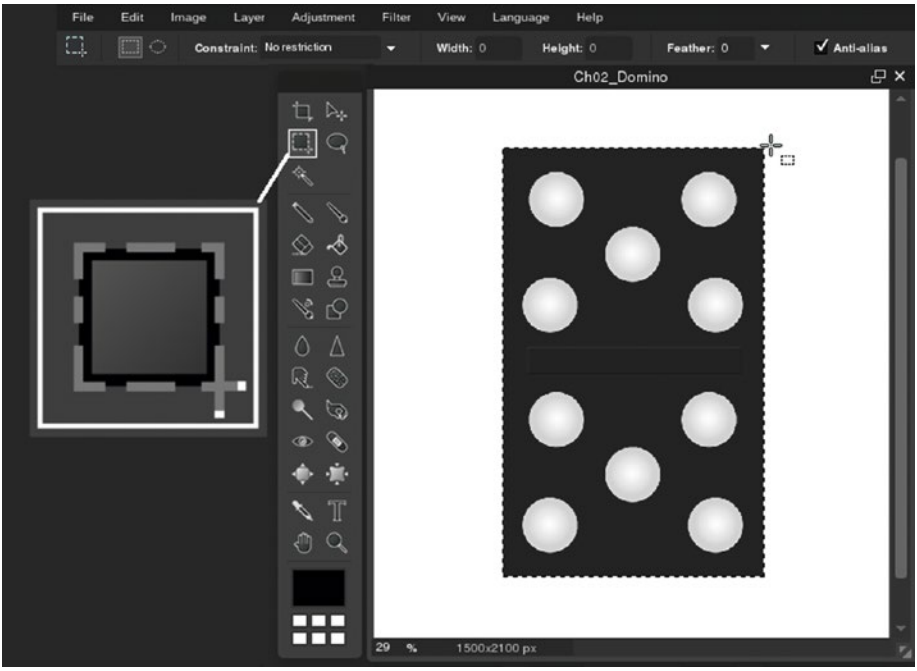

Figure 2-4. *Selecting the domino graphic using the Marquee tool*

To add to a selection, hold the Shift key down. To subtract from a selection, hold the Control key down.

Additional Options

The Marquee tool has several settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Rectangle/Circle or Elliptical/Circle*—Indicated by icons.
- *Constraint*:
  - *No Restriction*—The width and height of the selection can be adjusted independently (either by clicking and dragging, or using the Width/Height numeric input boxes).
  - *Aspect Ratio*—Allows the tool to be set as either a perfect square (which it does by default) or rectangle whose width remains proportional to the height as the tool is dragged. The settings can be changed using the Width/Height numeric input boxes.
  - *Output Size*—Crops the image but maintains the current width and height.
- *Feather*—This option softens the edge of the selection (Figure 2-5). The higher the numeric value entered in the numeric input box, the softer the edge.

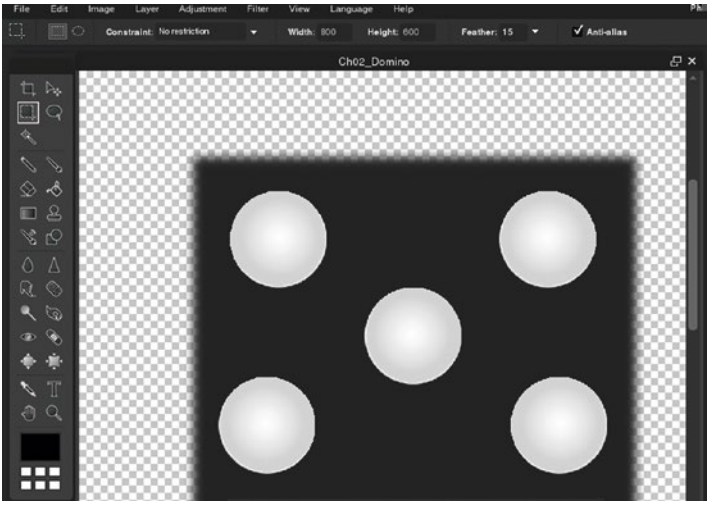

Figure 2-5. *Using the Feather tool option softens the edge*

- *Anti-Alias*—This option helps create smoother lines and curves in selections by reducing the appearance of jagged edges.

Lasso Tool (L)

The Lasso tool is used for making selections around objects with irregular shapes or polygonal shapes, as shown in Figure 2-6.

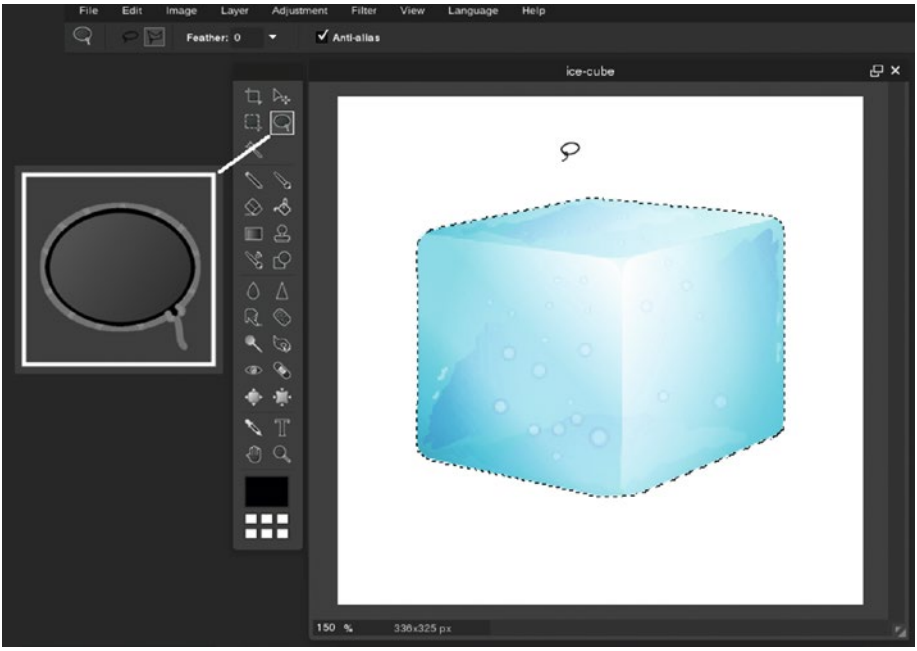

Figure 2-6. *Using the Lasso tool to make a selection*

To add to a selection, hold the Shift key down. To subtract from a selection, hold the Control key down.

Additional Options

The Lasso tool has several settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Free Hand or Polygonal Selection*—Indicated by icons.
- *Feather*—Creates a soft edge around the selection.
- *Anti-Alias*—Creates smoother lines by reducing jagged edges.

Wand Tool (W)

The Wand tool is used for making selections based on color and tone. For example, the red areas of the beach ball are quickly selected by clicking them with the Wand tool (Figure 2-7).

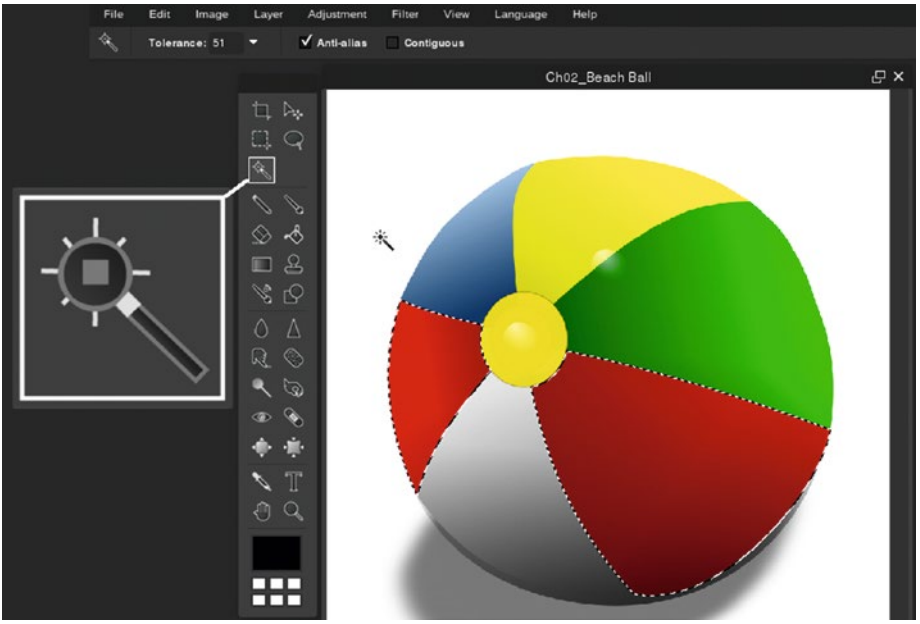

Figure 2-7. *The Wand tool selects areas by color and tone*

To add to a selection, hold the Shift key down. To subtract from a selection, hold the Control key down.

Additional Options

The Wand tool has several settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Tolerance*—Adjusts the range of color and tone the Wand tool selects. The higher the number, the wider the range the tool selects.
- *Anti-Alias*—Creates smoother lines by reducing jagged edges.
- *Contiguous*—Selects continuous areas of color and tone.

Pencil Tool (No Shortcut)

The Pencil tool is used for drawing as you would with an actual pencil, and it mimics a pencil's characteristics quite well (Figure 2-8).

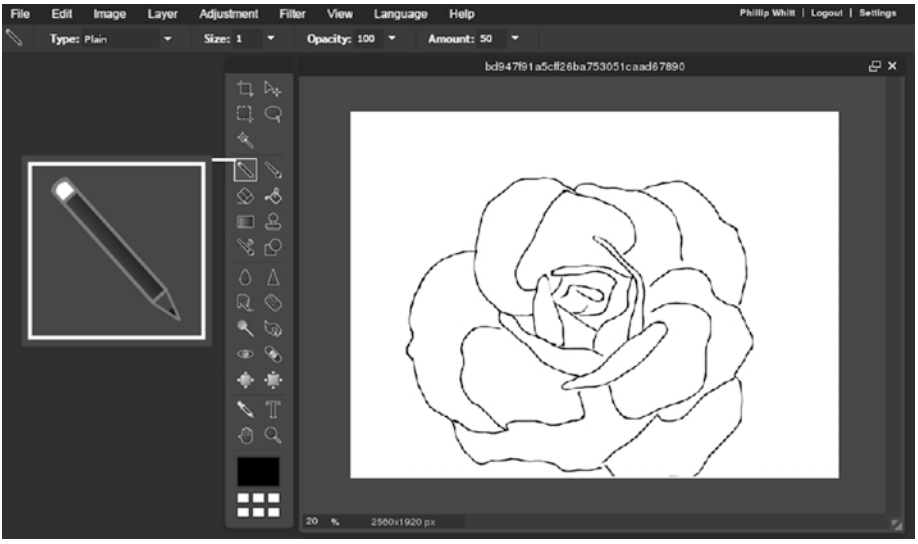

Figure 2-8. *The Pencil tool can be used for digital sketching and drawing*

Additional Options

The Pencil tool has several settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Type*—Allows you to draw the following types of lines (Figure 2-9):
  - Plain—A basic, hard pencil line.
  - Sketchy—Resembles lines rapidly sketched out.
  - Trail—Draws lines that trail off slightly at the ends.
  - Shaded—Draws angled and curved lines with a smudged effect.
  - Sticky—Draws lines drawn with a sticky or waxy medium effect.
  - Ink—Resembles lines drawn with an artist's marker.

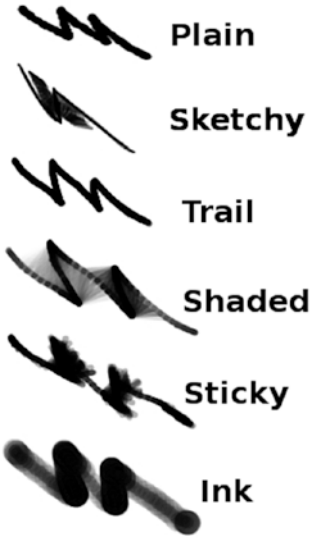

Figure 2-9. *The Pencil tool can create various types of lines*

- *Size*—The line diameter measured in pixels.
- *Opacity*—Controls how opaque or transparent a line is.
- *Amount*—Controls how much of an effect is applied.

Brush Tool (B)

The Brush tool is used for applying color in the fashion an artist's paintbrush does. It can be used for creating digital paintings and illustrations (Figure 2-10).

Figure 2-10. *The Brush tool can be used to create digital paintings*

Additional Options

The Brush tool has numerous settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Brush*—Offers a plethora of preset choices, including nibs of assorted shapes and sizes, hard or soft tips, and other settings (Figure 2-11).

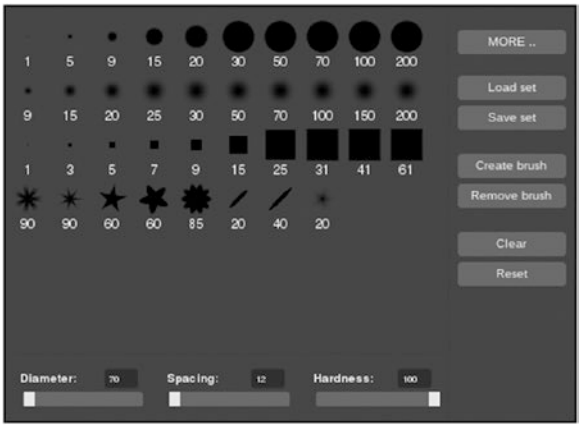

Figure 2-11. *The Brush tool settings come in a wide assortment shapes and sizes*

Under the More subset, there are specialty brushes such as Artistic, Nature, Makeup, Shapes, and Misc (Figure 2-12).

Figure 2-12. *Additional brush options under the More subset*

- *Opacity*—Controls how opaque or transparent the applied color is.
- *Hard Tip*—Gives the brush currently being used a hard-tipped nib.
- *Scatter*—Creates multiple copies of the brush tip with each stroke.
- *Diffuse*—Creates a misty, splattered effect similar to using spray paint.

Eraser Tool (E)

The Eraser tool removes image data (Figure 2-13). On non-layered images, it removes data, revealing the underlying background color.

Figure 2-13. *The Eraser tool removes image data*

On layered images, using the Eraser tool reveals the image data on the underlying layer(s), as shown in Figure 2-14.

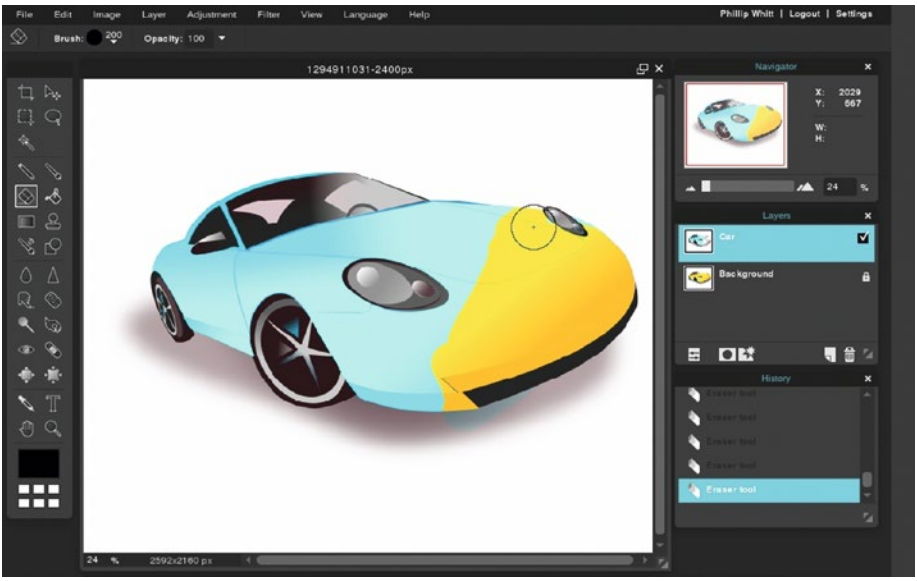

Figure 2-14. *Using the Eraser tool on a layered image*

Additional Options

The Eraser tool has the following settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Brush*—Opens the Brush Preset dialog box.
- *Opacity*—Controls how opaque or transparent the erased data is.

Paint Bucket Tool (G)

The Paint Bucket tool is used for quickly applying color to large areas of an image (Figure 2-15).

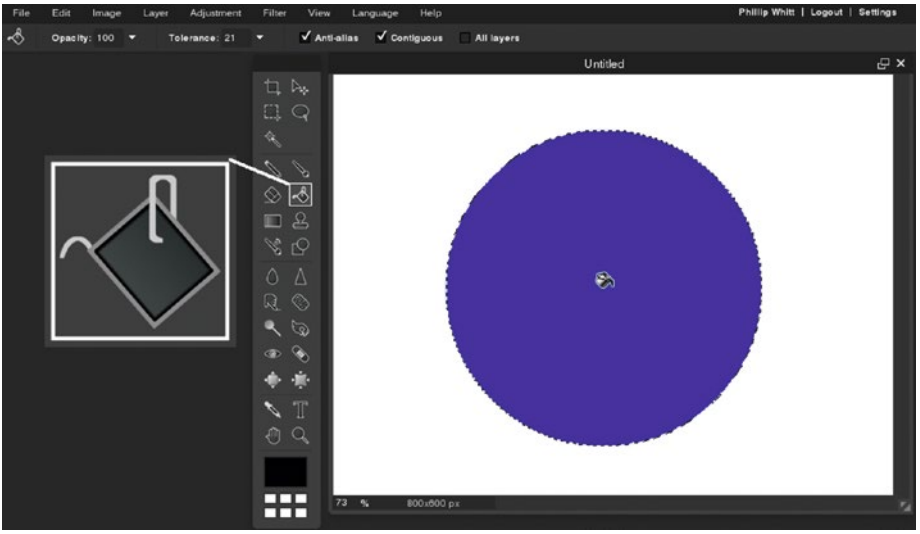

Figure 2-15. *The circular selection filled in using the Bucket Fill tool*

Additional Options

The Paint Bucket tool has several settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Opacity*—Controls how opaque or transparent the filled area is.
- *Tolerance*—Controls how little or how much color fills an area. Lower tolerance settings restrict the function to pixels that are closest in color or tone. Higher tolerance settings extend to pixels less similar in color or tone (Figure 2-16).

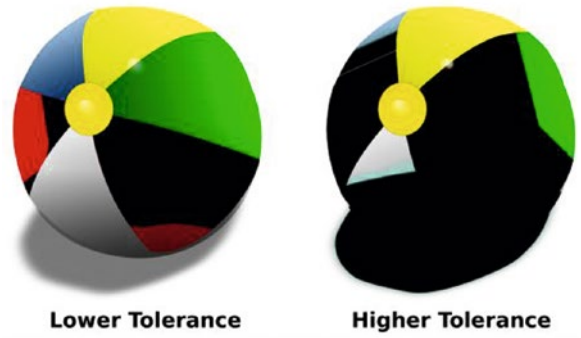

Figure 2-16. *Comparison of lower and higher tolerance settings*

- *Anti-Alias*—Creates smoother lines by reducing jagged edges.
- *Contiguous*—Selects continuous areas of color and tone.
- *All Layers*—Allows you to apply the fill to an area on a layer separate from that containing the colors being sampled.

Gradient Tool (No Shortcut)

The Gradient tool is used for creating a transition of one color to another. As shown in Figure 2-17, the circular selection is filled with the default setting gradient that starts as white and ends in black.

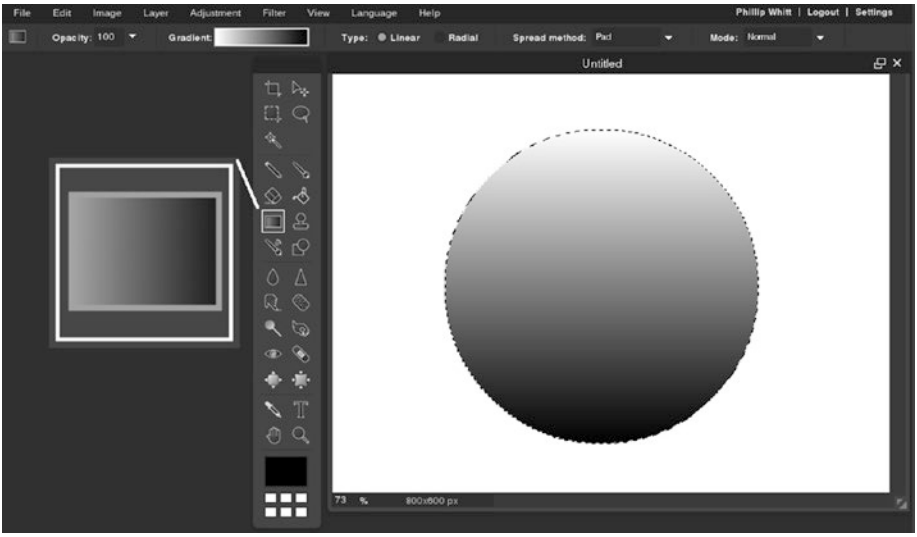

Figure 2-17. *Example of a gradient*

Additional Options

The Gradient tool has several settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Opacity*—Controls how opaque or transparent the filled area is.
- *Gradient*—Offers 43 preset gradients of varying styles and colors.
- *Linear/Radial* (Figure 2-18)—Lets you choose between creating a gradient that extends from one point to another in a straight line (linear), or a gradient that starts at one point and extends outward in every direction (radial).

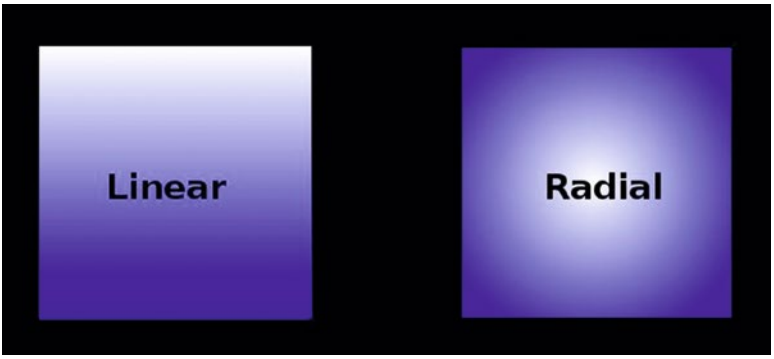

Figure 2-18. *Comparison of a linear and radial gradient*

- *Spread Method*—Controls the way the gradient flows.
  - Pad (default)
  - Reflect (creates a mirrored effect)
  - Repeat (creates a pattern by repeating the gradient)
- *Mode*—Offers a choice blend modes, which create a variety of color effects.

Clone Stamp Tool (S)

The Clone Stamp tool is used for sampling pixels from one area and pasting them to another. In Figure 2-19, the star on the far left is sampled and then copies of it are pasted.

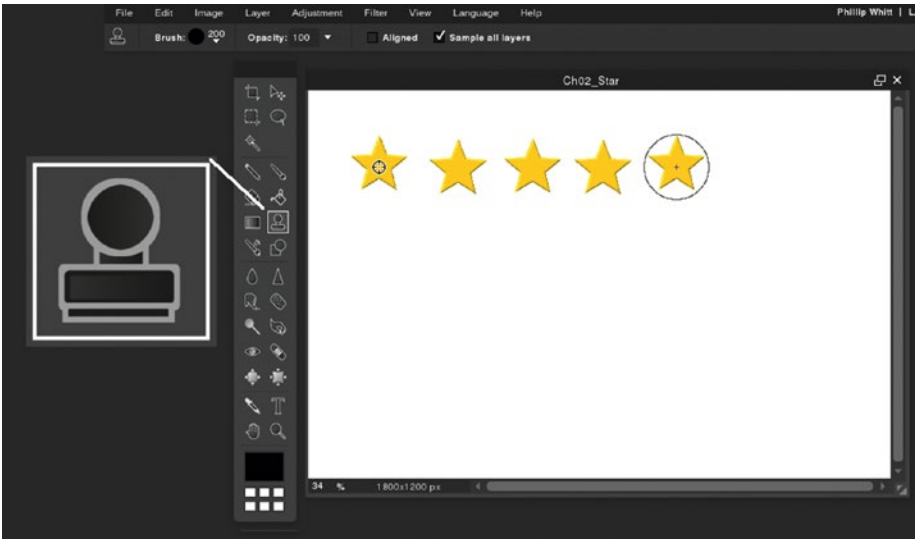

Figure 2-19. *Using the Clone Stamp tool to make copies of the star*

■ **Note** The Clone Stamp tool is a staple for use in retouching and restoring images, because of its ability to sample good areas of the image and to paste them over flawed areas.

Additional Options

The Clone Stamp tool has several settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Brush*—Opens the Brush Preset dialog box.
- *Opacity*—Controls how opaque or transparent the filled area is.
- *Aligned*—When this option is checked, the sample point remains in close proximity to the Clone Stamp tool as you work along the image.
- *Sample All Layers*—Allows you to sample image data from an image and paste it on to a different layer.

Color Replace Tool (No Shortcut)

The Color Replace tool is used to quickly change an area of the image from one color to another (Figure 2-20). This tool only works on RGB images with color, not grayscale images.

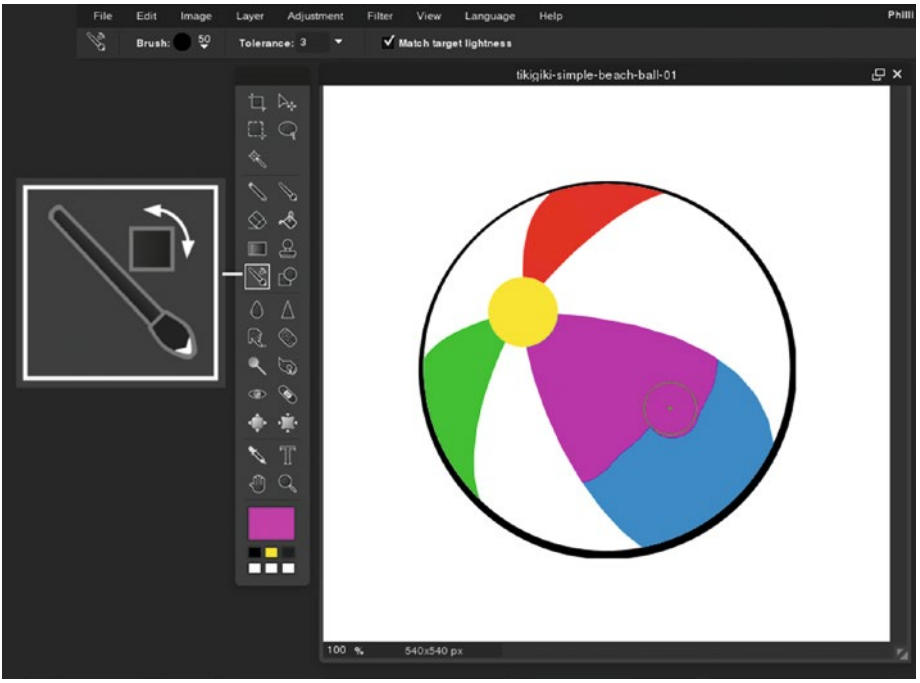

Figure 2-20. *Using the Color Replace tool*

Additional Options

The Color Replace tool has several settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Brush*—Opens the Brush Preset dialog box.
- *Tolerance*—Adjusts the range of color and tone the tool replaces. The higher the number, the wider the range of color the tool replaces.

- *Match Target Lightness*—Matches the lightness value of the selected target color (Figure 2-21). When unchecked, the lightness value of the underlying color is matched.

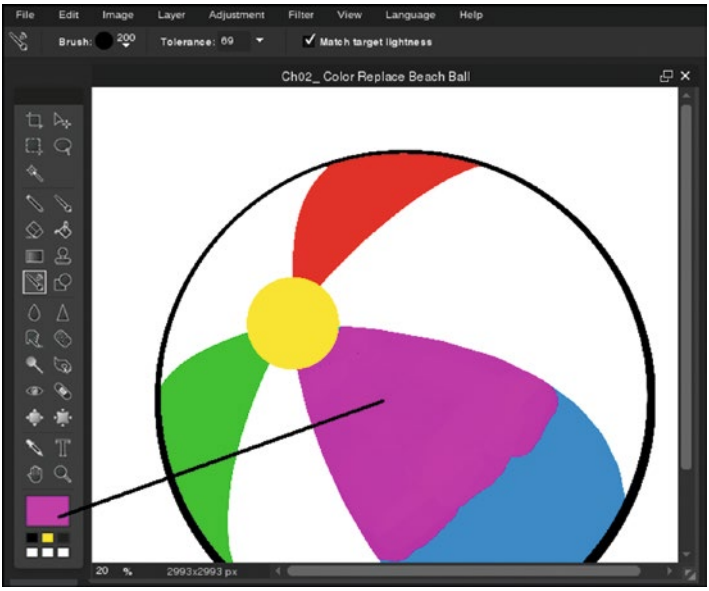

Figure 2-21. *The Match Target Lightness option matches the lightness value of the selected target color*

Draw Tool (No Shortcut)

The Draw tool is used for creating basic shapes (Figure 2-22). The Draw tool can be used to create simple illustrations.

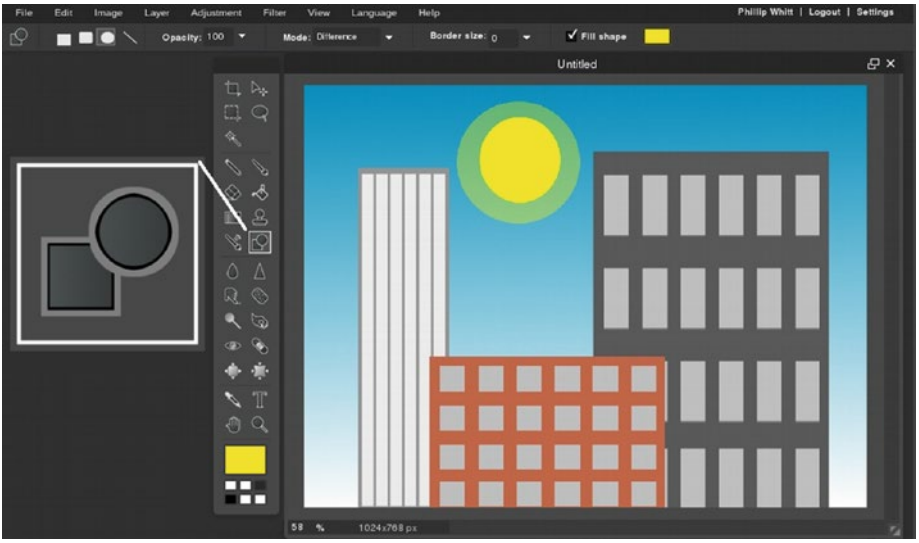

Figure 2-22. *An illustration created using the Draw tool*

Additional Options

The Draw tool has several settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Shapes*—Includes rectangle, rounded rectangle, ellipse, and line.
- *Opacity*—Controls how opaque or transparent the filled area is.
- *Mode*—Offers a choice blend modes, which create a variety of color effects.
- *Border Size*—Controls the size of the border around the shape (setting the option to zero adds no border).
- *Fill Shape*—Fills the shape with color when the option is checked (click the small rectangle to the right to access the Color Selector).

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Blur Tool (R)

The Blur tool is used to soften image data in local areas (Figure 2-23).

Figure 2-23. *Using the Blur tool to soften image data*

This tool can be used to reduce the harshness of hard edges, eliminate small specks of dust on old photos, and for portrait touch-up work (to soften skin and blemishes).

Additional Options

The Blur tool has two settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Brush*—Opens the Brush Preset dialog box.
- *Strength*—Controls how strong the blurring effect is.

Sharpen Tool (Y)

The Sharpen tool is used to increase the apparent sharpness of image data in local areas (Figure 2-24). This tool can be used to make local areas of an image appear to be a bit more in focus.

Figure 2-24. *Using the Sharpen tool to increase image data sharpness*

Additional Options

The Sharpen tool has two settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Brush*—Opens the Brush Preset dialog box.
- *Strength*—Controls how strong the sharpening effect is.

Smudge Tool (U)

The Smudge tool is used to create a smeared effect (Figure 2-25). The effect is similar to that of running a finger through wet paint. This tool can be used to create a motion effect and is also used in portrait touch-up.

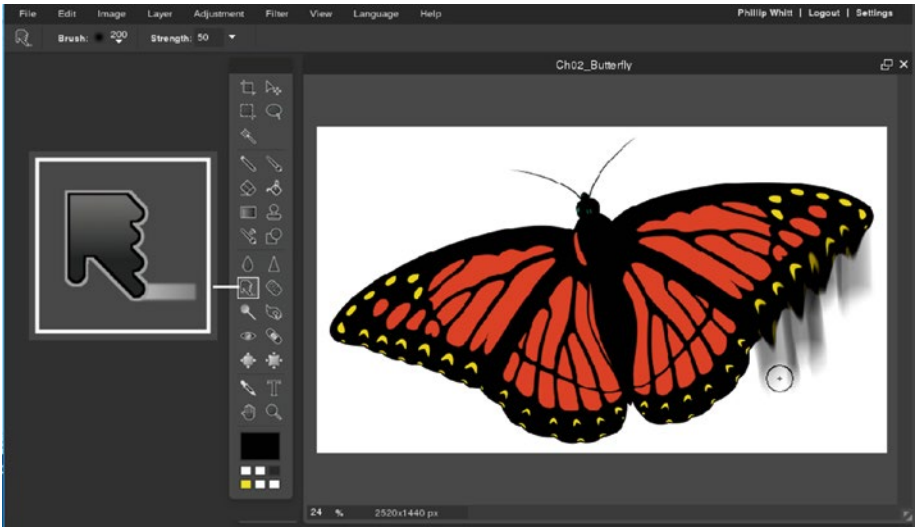

Figure 2-25. *Using the Smudge tool to create a smeared effect*

Additional Options

The Smudge tool has two settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Brush*—Opens the Brush Preset dialog box.
- *Strength*—Controls how strong the smudge effect is.

Sponge Tool (P)

The Sponge tool is used to increase or decrease color saturation in local areas. The left side shows color desaturation (reduced color intensity), while the right shows increased color saturation (intensity) (Figure 2-26). This tool can be useful when retouching old color photographs with uneven color fading.

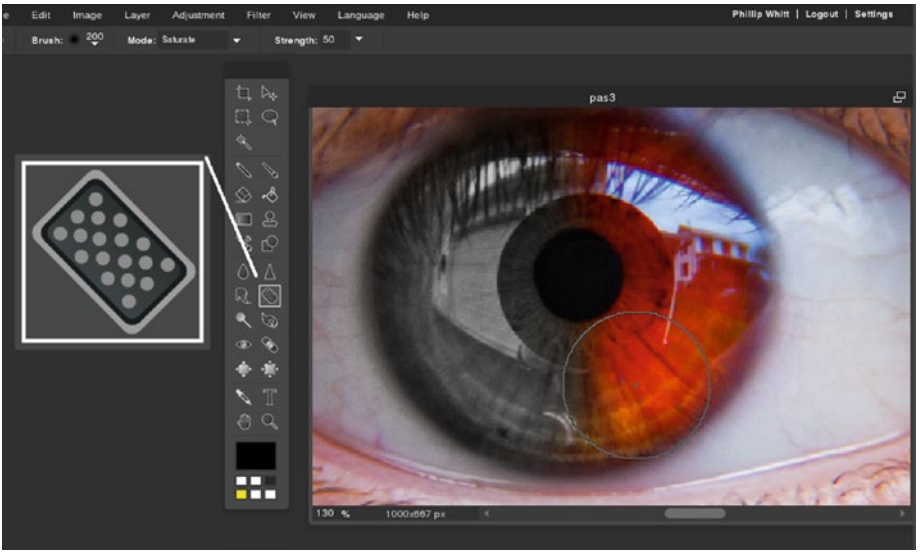

Figure 2-26. *The Sponge tool increases or decreases color saturation in local (specific) areas of the image*

Additional Options

The Sponge tool has three settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Brush*—Opens the Brush Preset dialog box.
- *Saturate/Desaturate*—Increases or decreases color intensity.
- *Strength*—Controls how strong the effect is.

Dodge Tool (O)

The Dodge tool is used to lighten local areas in an image. This tool can be useful in correcting under exposure in specific areas of an image and to reveal detail lost in dark shadows (Figure 2-27).

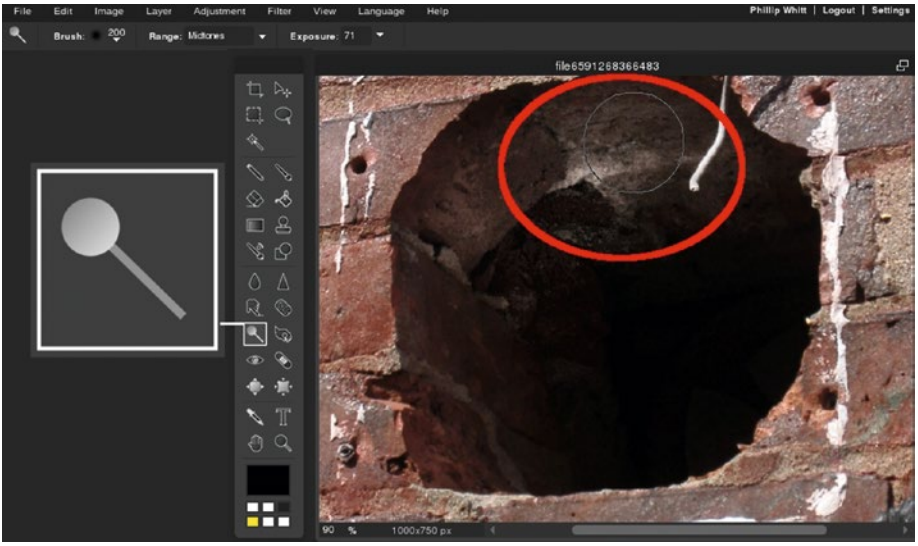

Figure 2-27. *The Dodge tool lightens local areas in an image*

Additional Options

The Dodge tool has three settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Brush*—Opens the Brush Preset dialog box.
- *Shadows/Midtones/Highlights*—Selects which tonal values to apply the Dodge tool. To lighten a dark area in an image, the Shadows option is selected, for the middle range the Mid-tones is selected, and for the lightest areas the Highlights is selected.
- *Exposure*—Controls how strong the lightening effect is.

Burn Tool (N)

The Burn tool is used to darken local areas (Figure 2-28). This tool can be useful for making corrections in local areas of images that are overexposed.

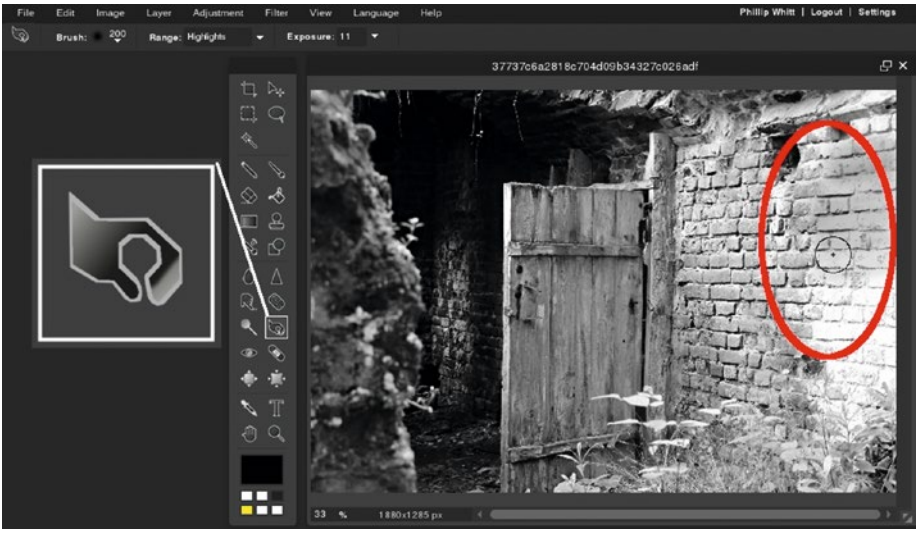

Figure 2-28. *The Burn tool darkens local areas in an image*

Additional Options

The Burn tool has three settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Brush*—Opens the Brush Preset dialog box.
- *Shadows/Midtones/Highlights*—Like the Dodge tool, this option selects which tonal values to apply to the Burn tool.
- *Exposure*—Controls how strong the darkening effect is.

Red Eye Reduction Tool (No Shortcut)

The Red Eye Reduction tool is used to correct the red eye effect that's caused by light from the camera's flash reflecting off the retina of the eyes (Figure 2-29).

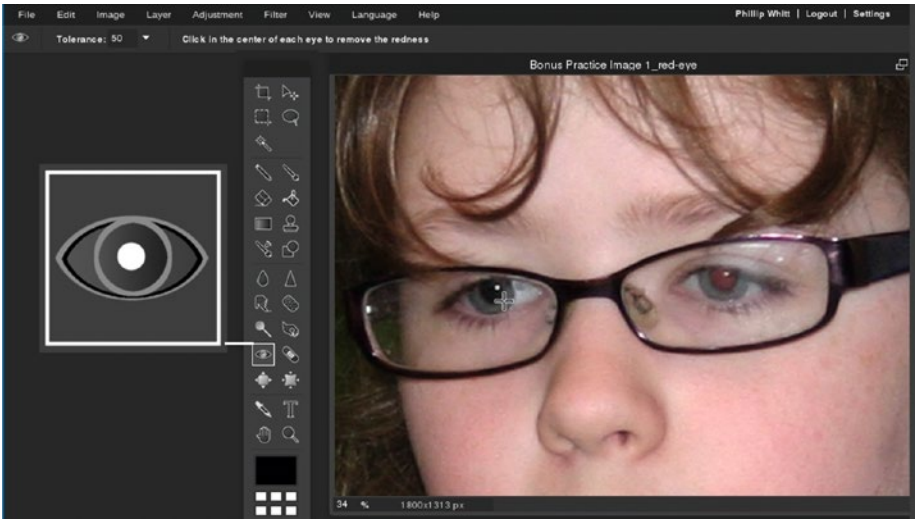

Figure 2-29. *The Red Eye Reduction tool corrects red eye caused by the camera's flash*

Additional Options

The Red Eye Reduction tool has one setting, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Tolerance*—Controls the range of pixels the effect is applied to (this option has a range from 0-100, and is set to 50 by default).

Spot Heal (No Shortcut)

The Spot Heal tool is used primarily to remove facial blemishes (Figure 2-30). It's similar to the Clone Stamp tool, but instead of copying image data exactly, it calculates the surrounding tone, color, and texture to blend the effect in seamlessly. This is a valuable tool for portrait retouching.

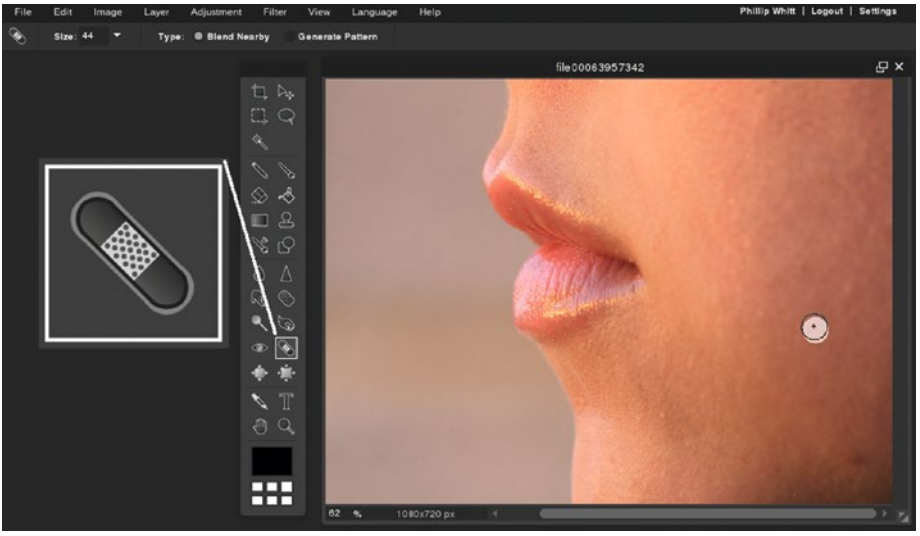

Figure 2-30. *The Spot Heal tool removes blemishes*

Additional Options

The Spot Heal tool has two settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Size*—Controls the brush diameter, which ranges from 10-200 pixels.
- *Type*—Determines the tool effects (Blend Nearby samples the surrounding color, texture, and tone; Generate Pattern creates a pattern of digital noise).

Bloat Tool (A)

The Bloat tool is used to enlarge areas of an image (Figure 2-31).

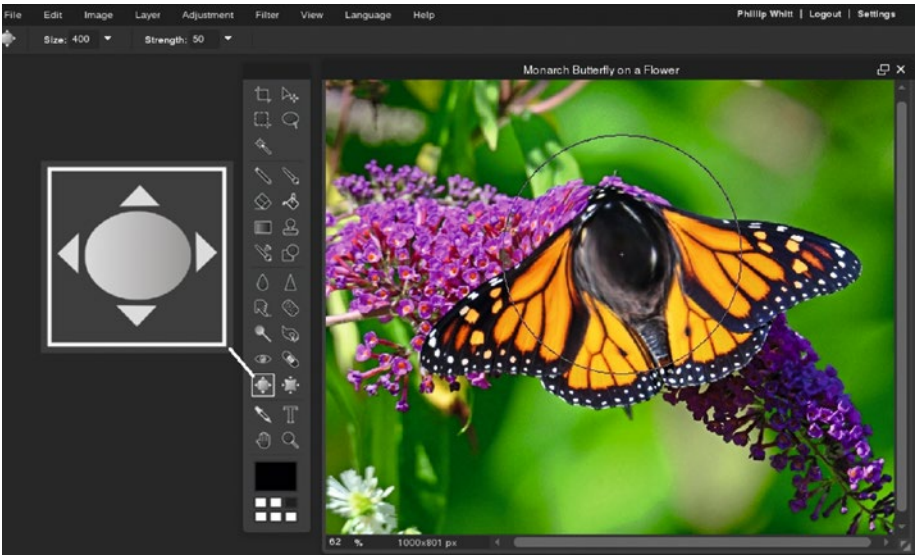

Figure 2-31. *The Bloat tool is used to enlarge portions of an image*

Additional Options

The Bloat tool has two settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Size*—Controls the brush diameter, which ranges from 4-400 pixels.
- *Strength*—Controls how strong the effect is.

Pinch Tool (K)

The Pinch tool is used to distort areas of the image, producing the effect of converging image data to a central point (Figure 2-32).

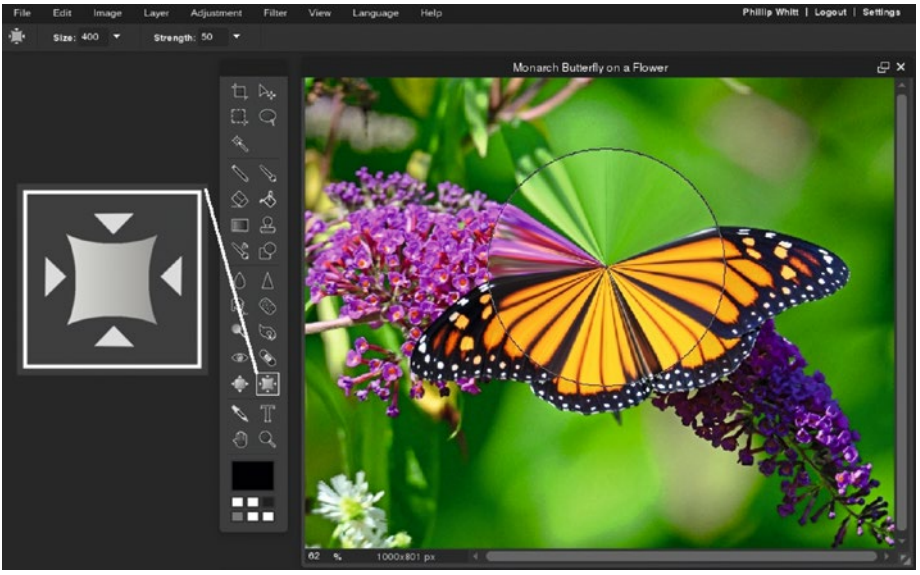

Figure 2-32. *The Pinch tool producing an effect of converging image data to a central point*

Additional Options

The Pinch tool has two settings, which can be found in the Additional Options dialog box (located under the menu bar):

- *Size*—Controls the brush diameter, which ranges from 4-400 pixels.
- *Strength*—Controls how strong the effect is.

Colorpicker Tool (I)

The Colorpicker tool is used to sample color from an area (or areas) of the image (Figure 2-33). The color information is stored in the Set Main Color tool (we'll look closer at that a little later).

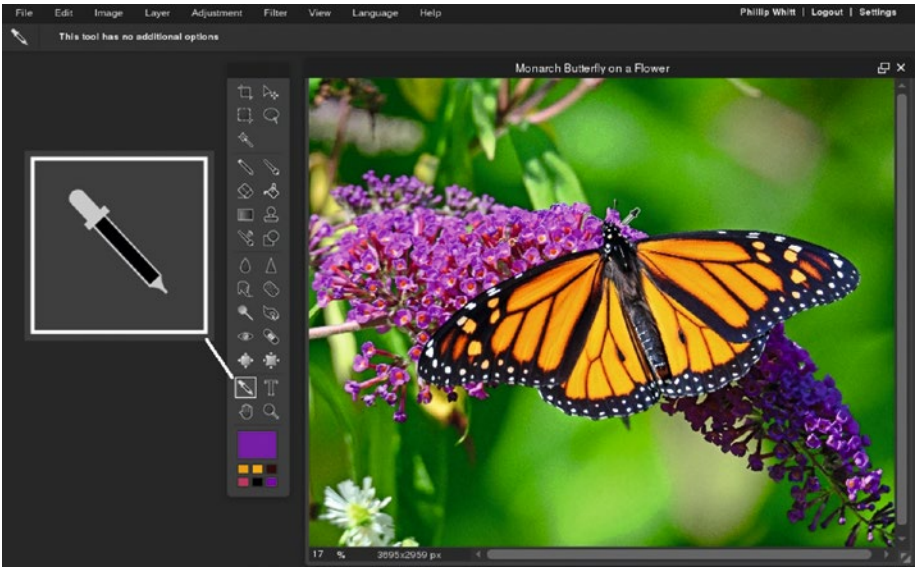

Figure 2-33. *The Colorpicker tool is used to sample color*

Additional Options

None

Type Tool (T)

The Type tool is used to add text to an image (Figure 2-34). The text is placed on its own layer, rather than directly on the image.

Figure 2-34. *The Type tool is used to place text over an image*

Additional Options

Clicking on the Type tool icon prompts a dialog box, which offers the following options:

- *Font*—The typeface style you want for the text.
- *Size*—Controls the size of the text measured in pixels. The sizes range from 5-130.
- *Style*—Offers text choices of Regular, Bold, Italic, and Bold/Italic.
- *Color*—Prompts the Color Selector to give your text the color of your choice.
- *Aligned*—Provides left, center, or right alignment for the text.

Hand Tool (H)

The Hand tool is used to move the image when it's at high magnification (Figure 2-35). When the tool is active, it's used by clicking and dragging the image to the area you want to view.

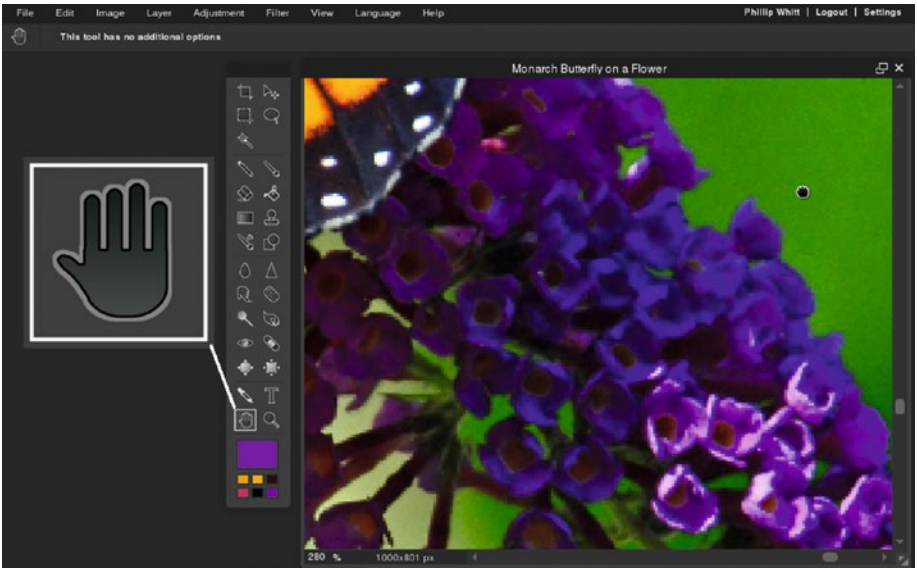

Figure 2-35. *The Pan tool is used to move the image while at high magnification*

Additional Options

None

Zoom Tool (Z)

The Zoom tool is used to magnify the image when close examination is necessary (Figure 2-36). This tool can be used by clicking in the image to zoom in, or clicking and dragging around a specific area, then releasing the mouse button. To zoom out, hold the Shift key and click. The Zoom tool's maximum magnification is 800%.

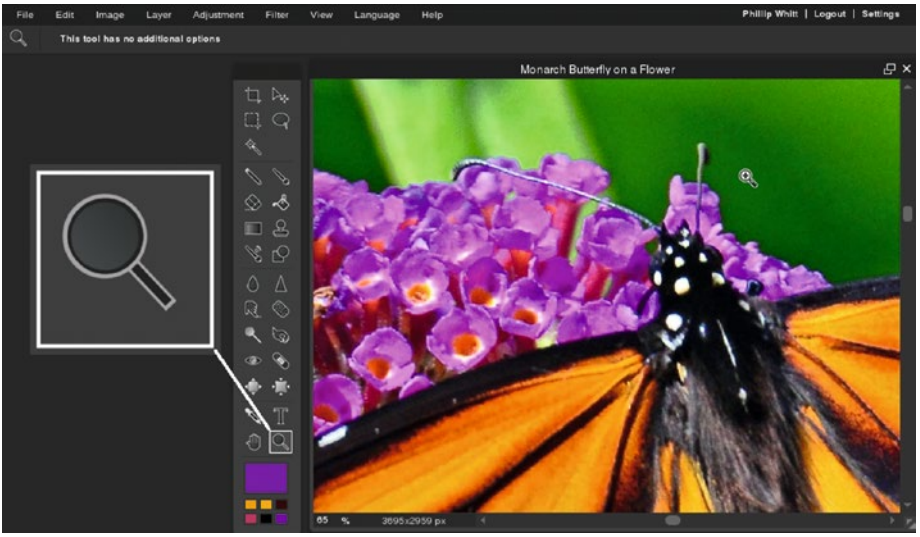

Figure 2-36. *The Zoom tool is used to magnify the image*

Additional Options

None

Set Main Color (No Shortcut)

This feature is used to set the main color (represented by the large swatch) to your choosing. The smaller swatches can contain custom colors. Clicking the swatch prompts the Color Selector dialog box, allowing you to move the circles and/or the sliders to achieve the color you want (Figure 2-37).

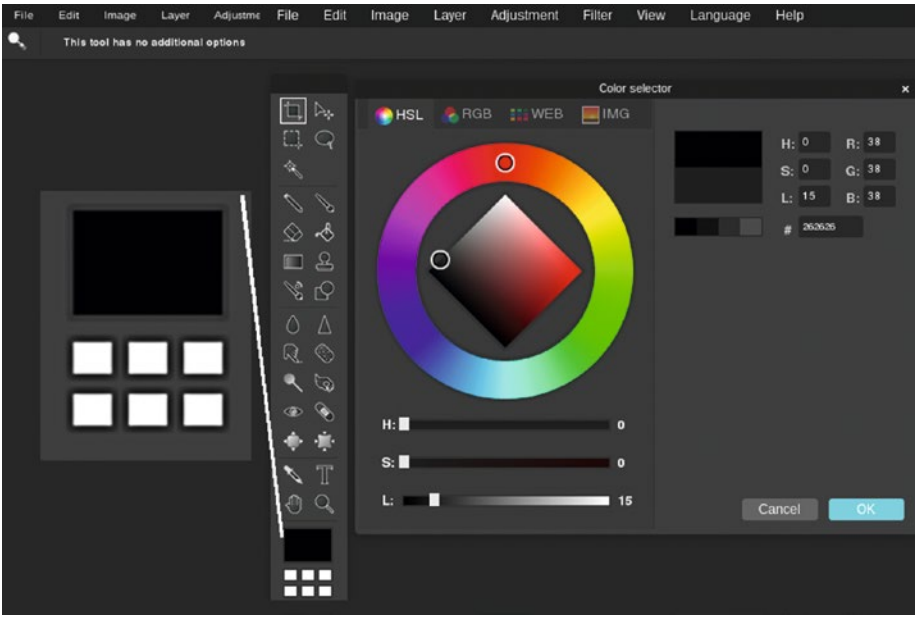

Figure 2-37. *The Color Selector dialog box*

By default, the Color Selector dialog box is set to the HSL (hue, saturation, and lightness) model. The outer ring represents all of the hue values, and the diamond shaped box represents the lightness value of the hue.

The other modes are:

- *RGB*—Based on red, green, and blue light generated by the computer's monitor. Various amounts of each light achieve certain colors. 100% of red, green, and blue light results in white, 0% of each results in black.
- *Web*—Used to select web-friendly colors.
- *IMG*—Essentially a palette of hexadecimal color swatches.

Summary

In this chapter, you were introduced to the tools that are used in editing images. To become better acquainted with these tools (primarily for those new to image editing), you should try each tool out on the practice image and instructions supplied in the *Tools Tryout Guide and Practice Images* folder, which can be obtained from the Source Code/Downloads tab from this Apress page: http://www.apress.com/9781484226971.

The next chapter covers the functions in the Pixlr Editor menu bar.

CHAPTER 3

The Pixlr Editor Menu Bar

This chapter looks at the functions that are accessed from the menu bar, as well as their keyboard shortcuts (when applicable). Here are the topics that will be covered:

- *File*: This section covers matters related to opening, saving, and printing your work.
- *Edit*: This section looks at the image editing functions available.
- *Image*: Here we look at functions related to the image such as image size, canvas size, rotating, flipping, and cropping.
- *Layer*: This section of the chapter looks at functions related to working with layers.
- *Adjustment*: This section looks at functions that adjust, correct, or modify the images tonality or color.
- *Filter*: Here we look at the filters and how they modify the image with specialized effects.
- *View*: This sections looks at various options available for viewing your image.
- *Language*: Lists all of the languages Pixlr Editor accommodates.
- *Help*: Lists various resources available if you need assistance.
- *Login/Signup*: Looks at how to sign up and log in to Pixlr Editor.

The File Menu

The File option is located on the far left side of the menu bar (Figure 3-1).

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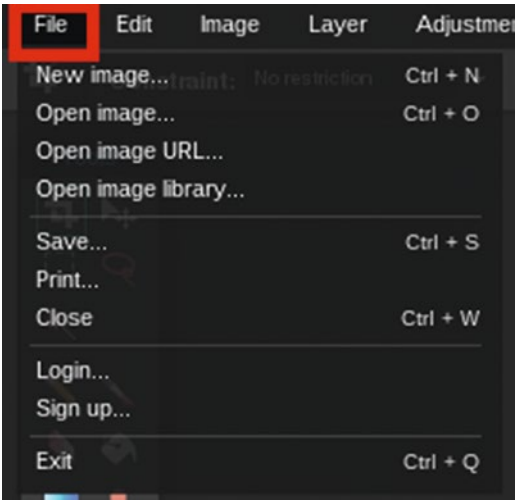

Figure 3-1. *The File option*

The following options are available from the File menu:

1. **New Image** (Control+N)—This dialog box creates a new, blank canvas for you to work in (Figure 3-2).

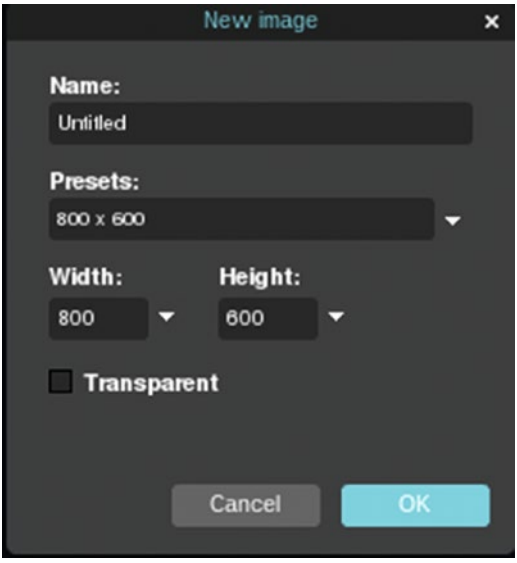

Figure 3-2. *The New Image dialog box*

The options provided by the New Image dialog box are:

- A textbox to name the image.
- A choice of preset sizes (it's set to 800 X 600 by default).
- Width and Height numeric input boxes. The size can also be adjusted by clicking the inverted triangles and using the sliders.
- Transparent (the background color is white by default).

2. **Open Image** (Control+O)—This option allows you to open an existing image from your computer (if you recall, this was covered briefly in Chapter 1).
3. **Open Image URL** (no shortcut)—This option allows you to open an image hosted on a web page into Pixlr Editor.
4. **Open Image Library** (no shortcut)—This option requires opening a Pixlr account to use. The Pixlr library (a cloud service) is a convenient way to store your images.
5. **Save** (Control+S)—Provides a choice of saving your work to your computer or to the Pixlr library. Your work can be saved in the following file formats:
   - JPEG (Good for most photos)
   - PNG (Transparent, full quality)
   - BMP (Large but non-destructive)
   - TIFF (Special format)
   - PXD (Layered Pixlr image)
6. **Print** (shortcut not indicated)—Launches the Printer Settings dialog box of the default printer.

■ **Note** Even though there is no print shortcut indicated in Pixlr Editor's Print option, Control+P should work, depending on the browser being used.

---

7. **Close** (Control+W)—Closes the active image. If edits are made to the image without saving the changes, a Confirm dialog box appears (Figure 3-3). At this point, you can save the changes, close the image without saving, or cancel the dialog box and continue editing.

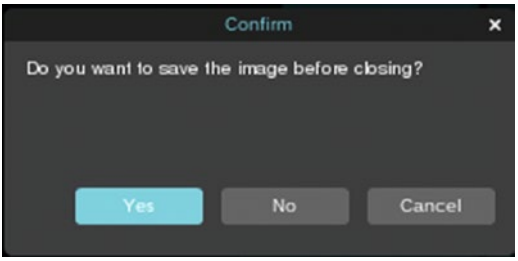

Figure 3-3. *The Confirm dialog box for the Close option*

8. **Login** (no shortcut)—If you have a Pixlr account and are signed in, this logs you out.
9. **Signup** (no shortcut)—Lets you sign up for a Pixlr account.
10. **Exit** (Control+Q)—Leaves the Pixlr Editor site. A dialog box is prompted with a reminder stating that changes made in the image may not be saved if you leave the site (Figure 3-4). The dialog box appearance and wording may vary, depending on the browser you're using.

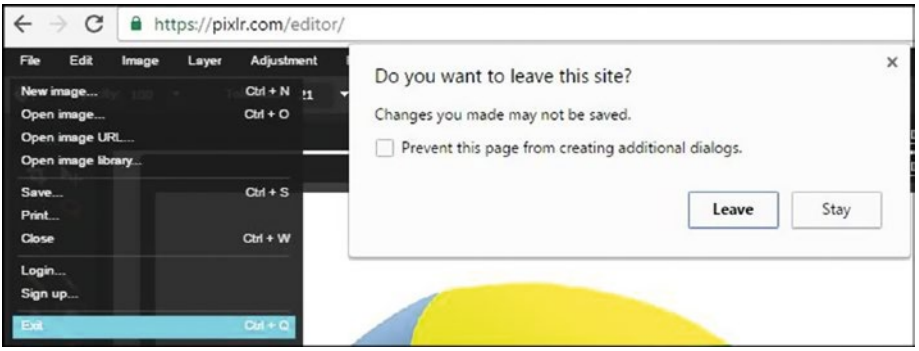

Figure 3-4. *Clicking Exit prompts a dialog box confirming the action*

■ **Note** The functions listed under File may vary slightly from one browser to another.

The Edit Menu

Edit is the next option on the menu bar (Figure 3-5). The Edit option contains numerous functions for making changes to the image.

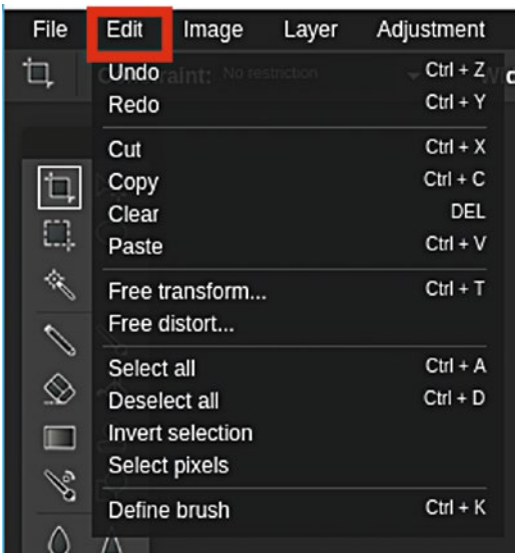

Figure 3-5. *The Edit option*

The following options available from the Edit menu:

1. **Undo** (Control+Z)—This operation undoes the last edit or function.
2. **Redo** (Control+Y)—This operation reinstates the previously reverted edit or function.
3. **Cut** (Control+X)—This operation deletes pixels from a selected area (Figure 3-6). The data is stored temporarily in an area called a clipboard.

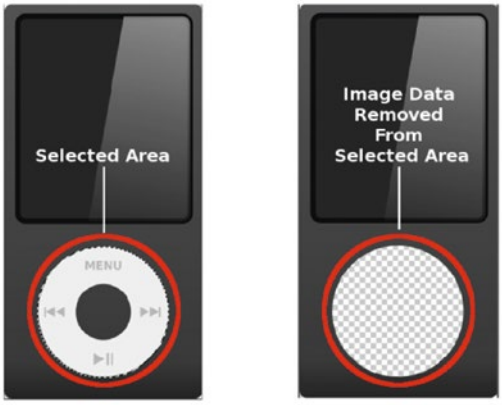

Figure 3-6. *The cut option deletes pixels from a selected area*

4. **Copy** (Control+C)—This operation duplicates image data from a selected image or selected area and stores it in the clipboard.
5. **Clear** (DEL)—This works in the same way as the Cut option, except the image data is deleted without storing it in clipboard.
6. **Paste** (Control+V)—This applies image data stored in the clipboard to the image, or on to a new layer.
7. **Free Transform** (Control+T)—This allows you to rotate, reshape, and resize images or graphical elements on an active layer (Figure 3-7). Holding the Shift key while resizing maintains the aspect ratio.

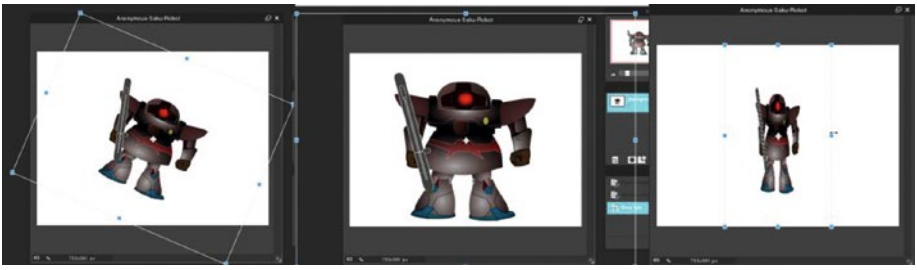

Figure 3-7. *Free transform is used to rotate, resize, or reshape images*

8. **Free Distort** (no shortcut)—This allows you to alter the image's perspective (Figure 3-8). In some cases, it can be used to correct images with perspective problems.

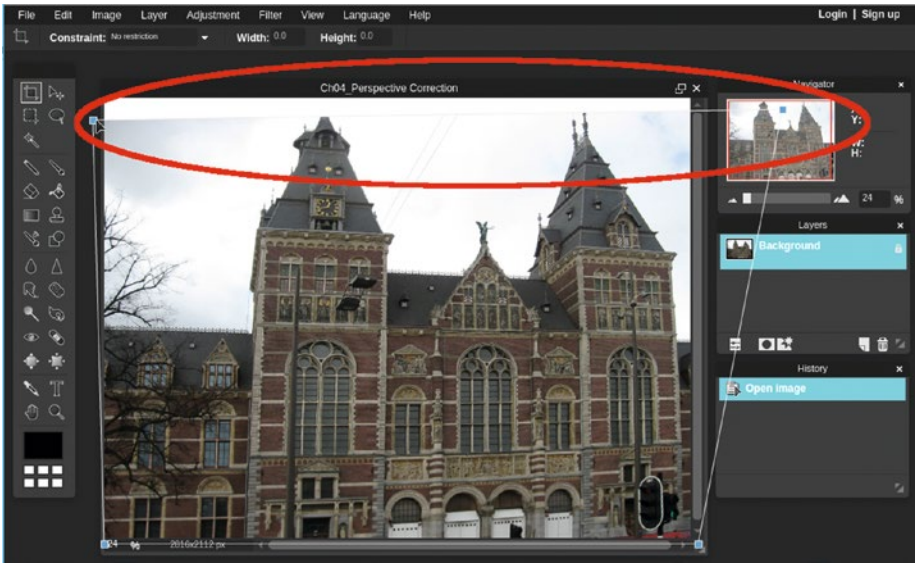

Figure 3-8. *Free distort is used to alter perspective*

9. **Select All** (Control+A)—This applies a selection around the entire image or active layer.
10. **Deselect All** (Control+D)—Cancels any active selections.
11. **Invert Selection** (no shortcut)—Changes the selection to apply to previously unselected image data and ignores the previously selected data (Figure 3-9).

Figure 3-9. *Invert selection switches the image data that is selected*

12. **Select Pixels** (no shortcut)—Selects only the pixels on an active layer.

13. **Define Brush** (Control+K)—Creates a brush from a selected image (Figure 3-10).

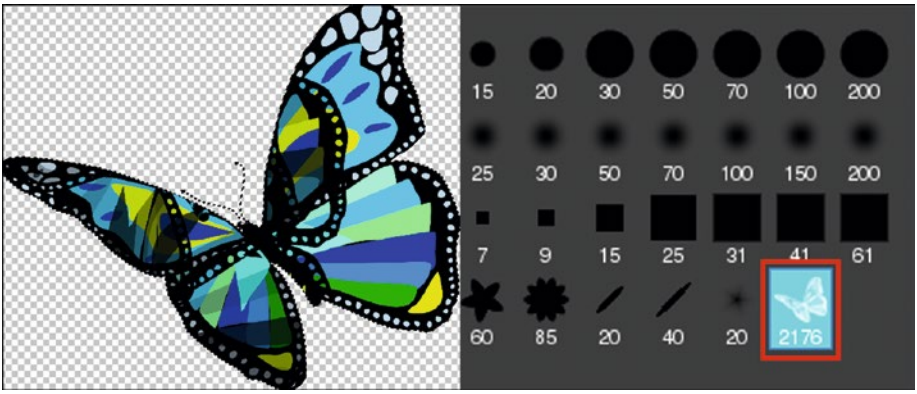

Figure 3-10. *Define brush creates a brush from an image*

■ **Note** After a new brush is defined from an image, it remains in the brush palette only as long as Pixlr Editor is open. However, the new brush can be preserved by saving the brush set to your computer. The saved brush set can be loaded as needed for future editing sessions.

The Image Menu

The Image menu provides several functions for changing the size of the image, the canvas, and its position (Figure 3-11).

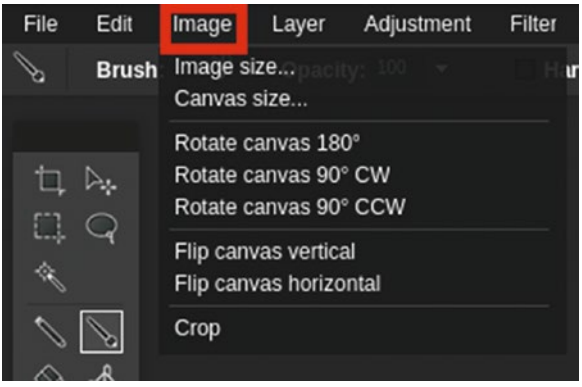

Figure 3-11. *The Image option*

The following functions are available from the Image menu:

1. **Image Size**—This operation controls the overall dimensions of your image. The image dimensions are measured in pixels, as shown in Figure 3-12. New values can be entered in the Width and Height boxes to change the image size. By leaving the Constrain Proportions box checked, the original proportions of the image are maintained. Unchecking it will result in an image with distorted proportions.

Figure 3-12. *New numeric values can be entered to change the image size*

The image size can also be changed by using the slider(s) in the Image Size dialog box (Figure 3-13).

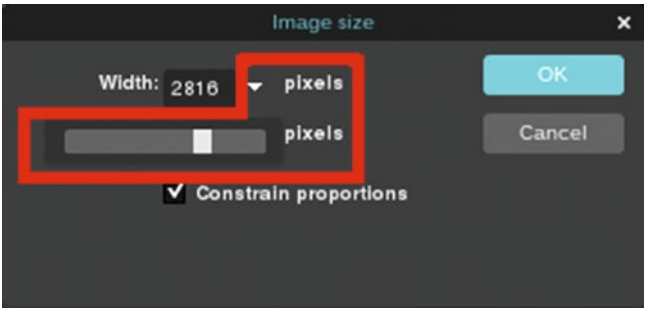

Figure 3-13. *The image size can also be changed by using the slider(s)*

2. **Canvas Size**—This option controls the overall dimensions of the canvas (the background that the image rests on). For example, when the canvas width and height is increased by 100 pixels, it leaves a border around the image (Figure 3-14).

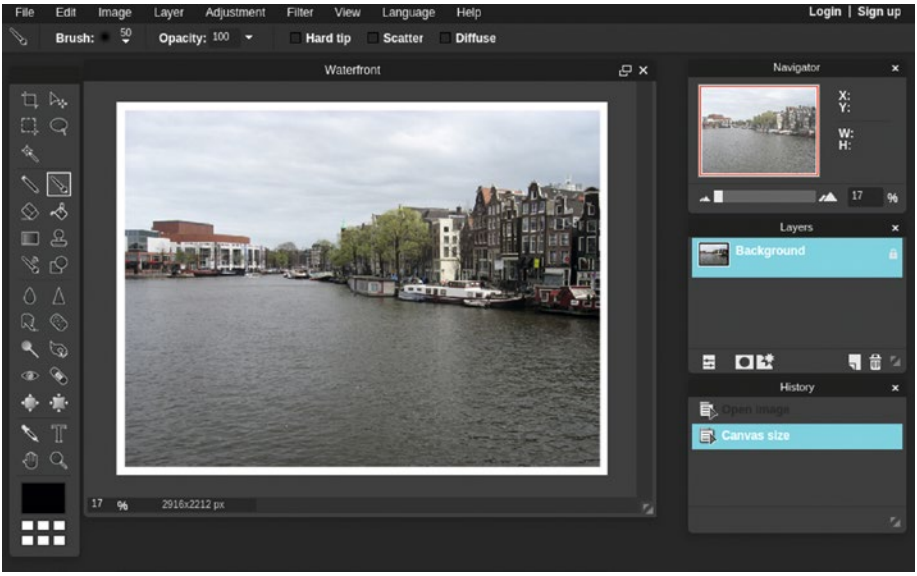

Figure 3-14. *By increasing the canvas width and height by 100 pixels, a border is added to the image*

The Canvas Size dialog box is similar to the Image Size dialog box in respect to the Width and Height numeric input boxes and sliders, but it doesn't have a Constrain Proportions feature. It allows the image to be anchored in the center, lower-left, left, upper-left, top, upper-right, right, lower-right, and bottom in relation to the canvas (Figure 3-15).

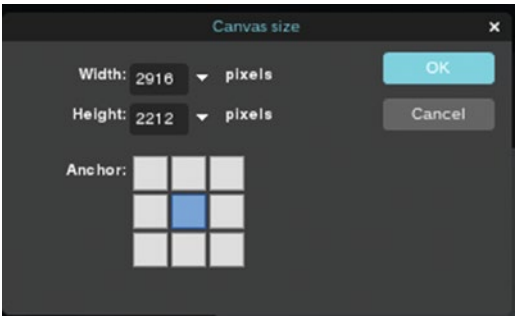

Figure 3-15. *The image can be anchored to various positions in relation to the canvas*

3. **Rotate Canvas 180°—**Rotates the canvas (including all layers) 180 degrees, making the image appear upside down (Figure 3-16).

Figure 3-16. *The image rotated 180 degrees*

4. **Rotate Canvas 90° CW**—Rotates the canvas (including all layers) 90 degrees clockwise (Figure 3-17).

Figure 3-17. *The image rotated 90 degrees clockwise*

5. **Rotate Canvas 90° CCW**—Rotates the canvas (including all layers) 90 degrees counter-clockwise.

6. **Flip Canvas Vertical**—Flips the canvas vertically and reverses it (including all layers), as shown in Figure 3-18.

Figure 3-18. *The image flipped vertically and reversed*

7. **Flip Canvas Horizontal**—Flips the canvas horizontally, resulting in a reversed image (including all layers), as shown in Figure 3-19.

Figure 3-19. *The image flipped horizontally*

8. **Crop**—Trims an image to the dimensions of a selection (Figure 3-20).

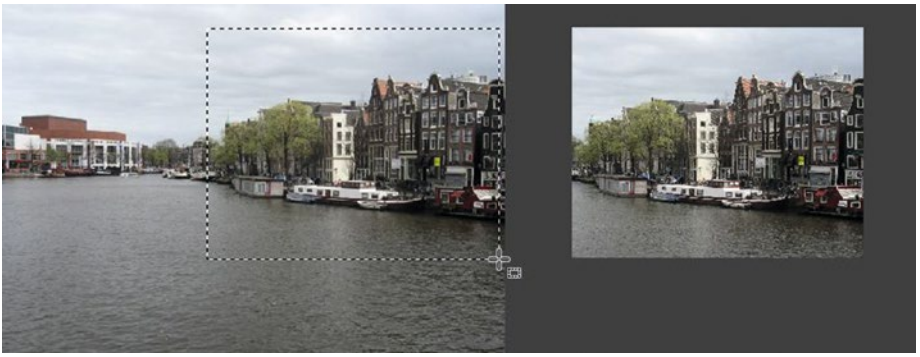

Figure 3-20. *The image cropped to the dimensions of the selection*

The Layer Menu

The Layer menu provides a number of functions for working with layers (Figure 3-21).

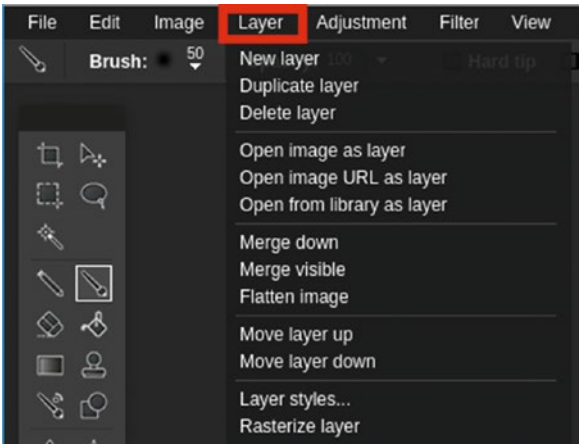

Figure 3-21. *The Layer menu*

■ **Note** If you are a beginner to image editing, I suggest you look over the *The Beginner's Guide to Layers* PDF, which can be obtained from the Source Code/Downloads tab from this Apress page: `http://www.apress.com/9781484226971`.

The following functions are available from the Layer option:

1. **New Layer**—Creates a new blank layer.
2. **Duplicate Layer**—Creates a duplicate of the active layer.
3. **Delete Layer**—Deletes any layer that's no longer needed.
4. **Open Image as Layer**—Opens another image as a layer and places it at the top of the layer stack of the image that's currently open (Figure 3-22).

Figure 3-22. *The image of the white car opened as a layer placed in the image of the green car*

5. **Open Image URL as Layer**—Opens an image hosted on a web page as a layer and places it at the top of the layer stack of the image that's currently open.
6. **Open From Library as Layer**—Opens an image from the library as a layer and places it at the top of the layer stack of the image that's currently open.
7. **Merge Down**—Combines the active layer with the one directly beneath into one layer (Figure 3-23).

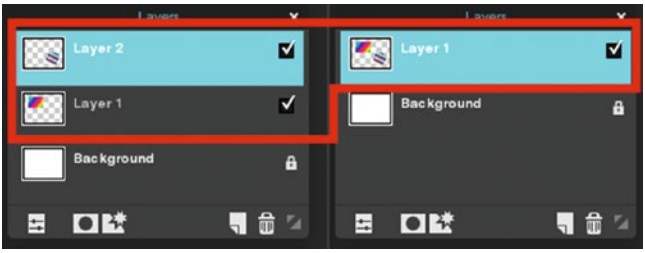

Figure 3-23. *Merge Down combines the active layer with the layer directly beneath it*

8. **Merge Visible**—Combines the layers with the visibility box checked into one layer (Figure 3-24). The invisible layers remain unchanged.

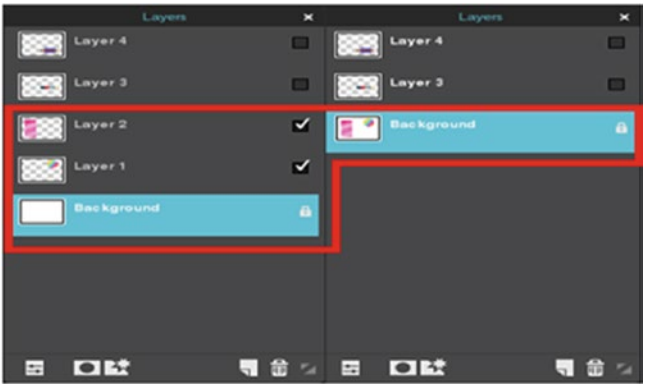

Figure 3-24. *Merge Visible combines the visible layers into one*

9. **Flatten Image**—Combines all of the image layers into one background layer with no transparency.
10. **Move Layer Up**—Moves the active layer up one level in the stacking order.
11. **Move Layer Down**—Moves the active layer down one level in the stacking order.
12. **Layer Styles**—Special effects that are applied to individual layers (Figure 3-25). You can apply one or more of the following effects:
    - Drop shadow
    - Inner shadow
    - Bevel
    - Outer glow
    - Inner glow

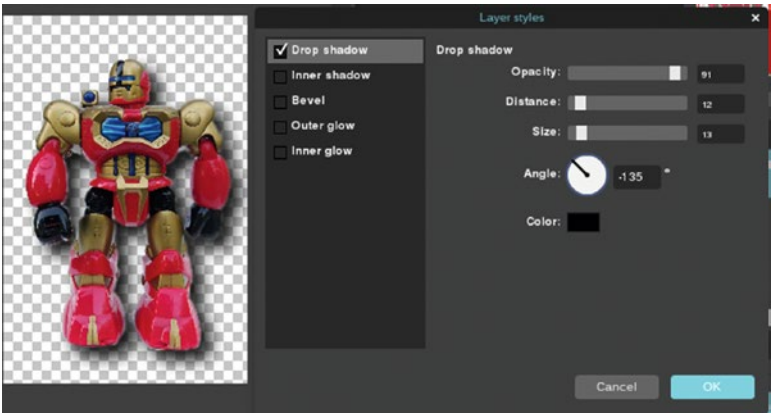

Figure 3-25. *Layer styles are special effects applied to individual layers*

13. **Rasterize Layer**—Coverts a vector-based text layer into a raster layer (Figure 3-26).

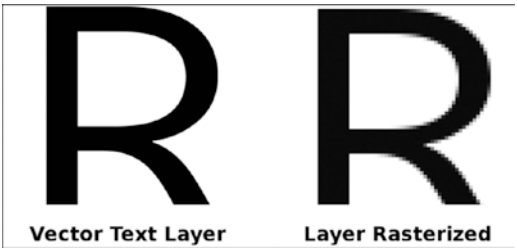

Figure 3-26. *A vector text layer converted into a raster layer*

14. **Add Layer Mask**—Adds a mask that hides the pixels of the active layer. Painting in the layer mask allows the user to reveal only selected portions of the image (Figure 3-27). By adjusting the opacity of the brush, the pixels can range from semi-transparent to fully opaque.

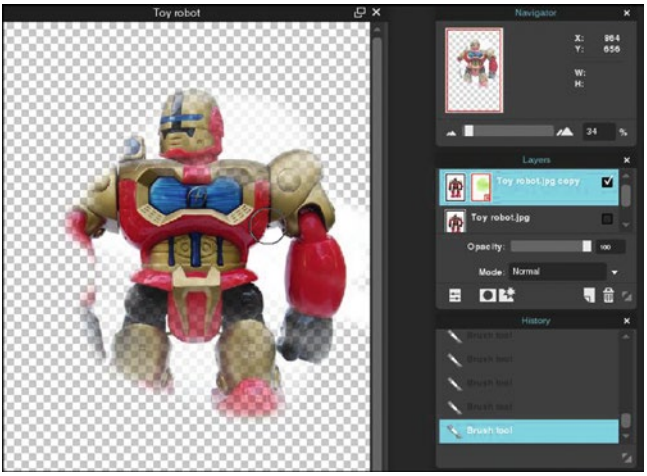

Figure 3-27. *A layer mask allows you to reveal selected parts of the image*

15. **Delete Layer Mask**—Removes the layer mask, reverting the layer to its original state.
16. **Apply Layer Mask**—Commits the changes made to the layer and removes the layer mask.
17. **Rotate Layer 180°**—Rotates the active layer 180 degrees (other layers remain unchanged).
18. **Rotate Layer 90° CW**—Rotates the active layer 90 degrees clockwise (the other layers remain unchanged).
19. **Rotate Layer 90° CCW**—Rotates the active layer 90 degrees counter-clockwise (the other layers remain unchanged).
20. **Flip Layer Vertical**—Flips the active layer vertically, reversing the layer's contents (the other layers remain unchanged).
21. **Flip Layer Horizontal**—Flips the active layer horizontally, reversing the layer's contents (the other layers remain unchanged).

The Adjustment Menu

The Adjustment menu hosts a number of functions for making tonal and color adjustments in the image (Figure 3-28).

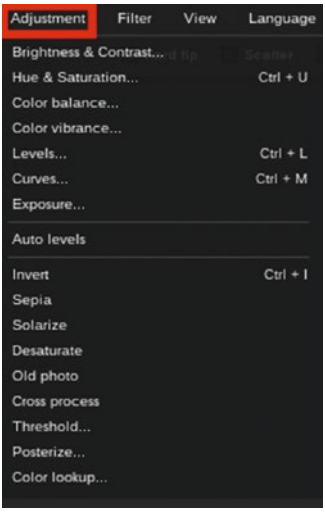

Figure 3-28. *The Adjustment menu*

Here's a look at the functions that are available from the Adjustment option:

1. **Brightness & Contrast** (no shortcut)—Opens a dialog box used for making adjustments in the brightness and/or contrast of an image (Figure 3-29). This is helpful for quickly boosting contrast in dull images.

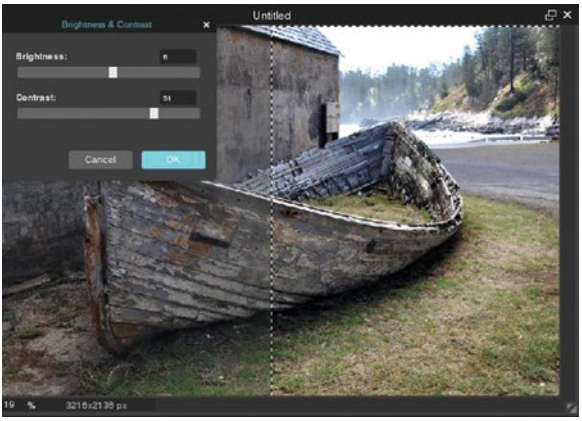

Figure 3-29. *The Brightness & Contrast dialog box helps improve dull images*

2. **Hue & Saturation** (Control+U)—Opens a dialog box used for making adjustments in the overall hues (color values), saturation (color intensity), and lightness of the image (Figure 3-30). Checking the Colorize option applies a monochromatic color tint to the image.

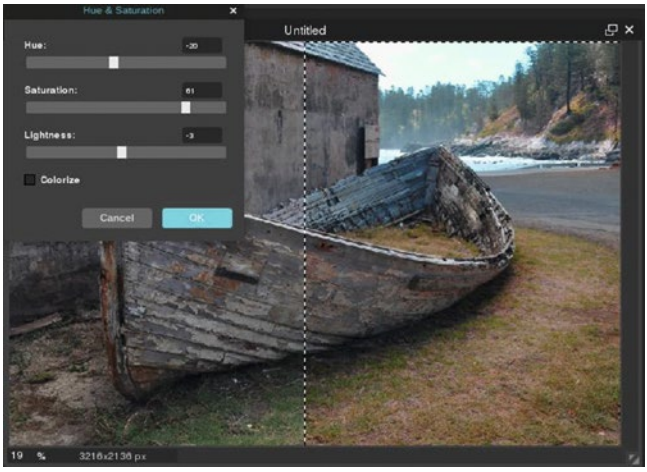

Figure 3-30. *The Hue & Saturation dialog box adjusts the hue, saturation, and lightness*

3. **Color Balance** (no shortcut)—Opens a dialog box used for correcting color imbalances. In the example shown (Figure 3-31), the image has a heavy magenta color cast. By increasing the green offset, the color cast is reduced.

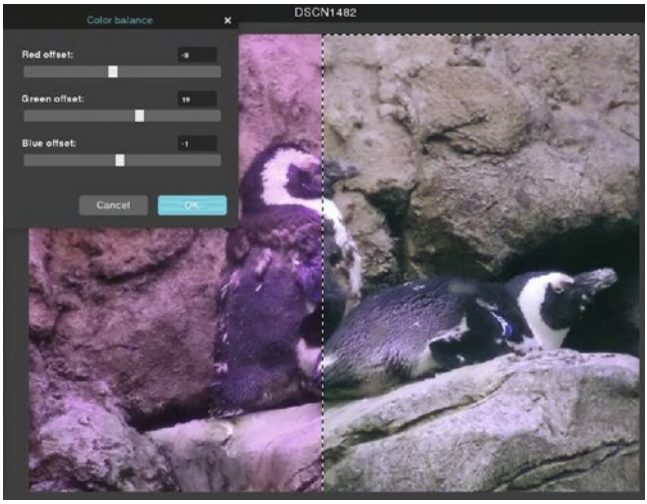

Figure 3-31. *The Color Balance dialog box helps improve images with color casts*

4. **Color Vibrance** (no shortcut)—Similar to saturation, this is used to increase color intensity. It's a good choice to use in images that contain skin tones because it maintains a natural look (Figure 3-32).

Figure 3-32. *The Color Vibrance dialog box boosts color intensity while maintaining natural skin tones*

5. **Levels** (Control+L)—This dialog box is used for making tonal adjustments in the highlights, midtones, and shadow ranges. It's an effective tool for improving contrast in dull images (Figure 3-33).

Figure 3-33. *The Levels dialog box is effective for making tonal corrections*

6. **Curves** (Control+M)—like Levels, this dialog box is also used for making tonal adjustments (Figure 3-34). However, it's a better choice when more precise control is required.

Figure 3-34. *The Curves dialog box is used when greater precision is required*

■ **Note** The Levels and Curves dialog boxes are both powerful and somewhat complex. They are covered at in greater depth in Chapter 5.

7. **Exposure (no shortcut)**—Makes quick corrections to images with exposure problems (Figure 3-35).

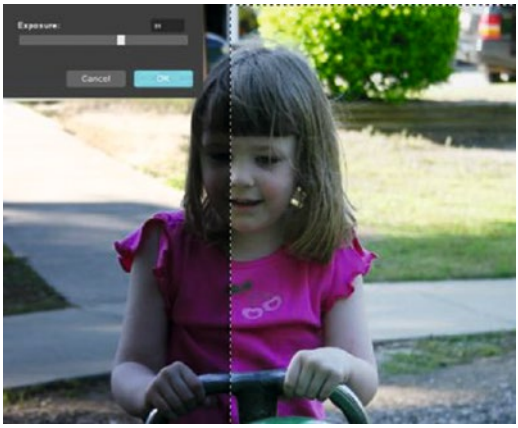

Figure 3-35. *The Exposure dialog box makes quick corrections to images with exposure problems*

8. **Auto Levels** (no shortcut)—Makes an automatic levels adjustment in one click (Figure 3-36).

Figure 3-36. *The Auto levels function works in one automatic operation*

9. **Invert** (Control+I)—Switches the colors and tonal values in the image to their opposites as they would appear in a photographic negative (Figure 3-37).

Figure 3-37. *The Invert function reverses the colors and tonal values*

10. **Sepia** (no shortcut)—Applies a sepia tone to the image (Figure 3-38).

Figure 3-38. *The Sepia function simulates sepia toning*

11. **Solarize** (no shortcut)—Mimics a photographic processing technique in which some of the image's colors and tonal values are inverted and some remain unchanged (Figure 3-39).

Figure 3-39. *Solarize inverts some of the colors and tonal values*

12. **Desaturate** (no shortcut)—Removes all of the colors from the image, leaving only the black, white, and gray values (Figure 3-40).

Figure 3-40. *Desaturate removes the colors, leaving only black, white, and gray values*

13. **Old Photo** (no shortcut)—Gives the image an appearance of an aged photograph (Figure 3-41).

Figure 3-41. *Old Photo gives the image an aged appearance*

14. **Cross Process** (no shortcut)—Mimics the technique of purposely processing one film type using a photographic chemical intended for another film type. (Figure 3-42).

Figure 3-42. *Cross processing is mimicked in this image*

15. **Threshold** (no shortcut)—Converts the image to pure black and white pixels (Figure 3-43). The slider in the dialog box adjusts the range of black/white pixels.

Figure 3-43. *Threshold converts the image to black and white pixels*

16. **Posterize** (no shortcut)—Eliminates the continuous gradation of tone for a stylized artistic effect (Figure 3-44). The strength of the effect is controlled by the slider in the dialog box.

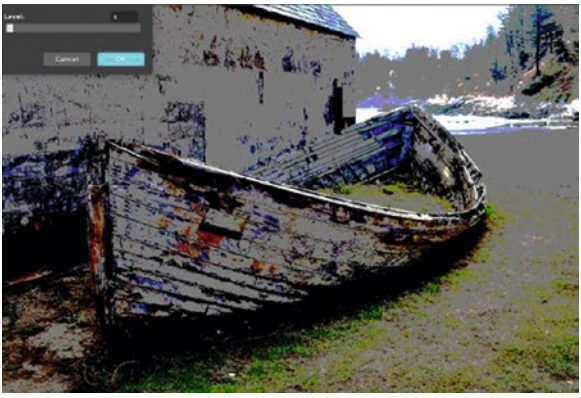

Figure 3-44. *Posterize creates a stylized effect*

17. **Color Lookup** (no shortcut)—Maps the color and tonal values from a gradient to the image (Figure 3-45). The color stops in the Gradient dialog box can be adjusted by using the sliders.

Figure 3-45. *Color lookup maps the color and tonal values from a gradient to the image*

The Filter Menu

The Filter menu consists of 28 functions for applying specialized effects. Some filters have useful applications for image correction (such as Blur and Sharpen) that modify focus). Others apply artistic, photographic, and fun effects.

Here's a look at the filters and the effects applied by each one:

1. **Blur**—Softens the image focus very slightly. The filter can be applied repeatedly to increase the effect.

2. **Box Blur**—Softens the image focus based on contrasting areas in an image. Some detail may be left in linear areas (Figure 3-46).

Figure 3-46. *The Box Blur filter*

3. **Gaussian Blur**—Also used for blurring images (Figure 3-47), but softens the image more smoothly than Box Blur. Gaussian Blur simulates the effect of viewing the image through a translucent screen. The strength of the effect is controlled by the slider in the dialog box.

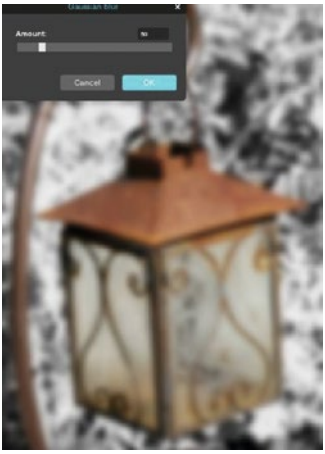

Figure 3-47. *The Gaussian Blur filter*

4. **Sharpen**—Increases the contrast between neighboring pixels to make the image appear slightly sharper. The filter can be applied repeatedly to increase the effect.

5. **Unsharp Mask**—Offers greater control than the Sharpen filter (Figure 3-48). The dialog box uses these three settings to achieve the best results possible:

   - *Amount*: The percentage of the effect applied.
   - *Radius*: The size of the edges to be sharpened.
   - *Threshold*: Helps prevent excessive speckling in smooth areas.

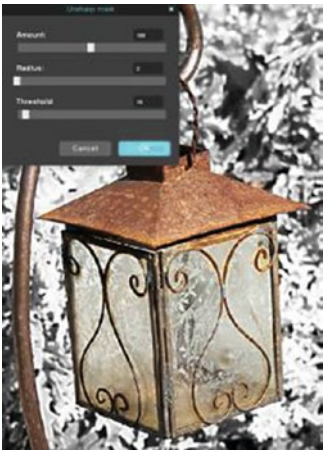

Figure 3-48. *The Unsharp Mask filter*

6. **Denoise**—Helps remove excessive digital noise from the image.
7. **Noise**—Introduces noise into the image (Figure 3-49). The amount is controlled by the slider in the dialog box, and there is a monochromatic option box.

Figure 3-49. *The Noise filter*

8. **Diffuse**—Creates a soft, impressionist-like image (Figure 3-50). The strength of the effect is controlled by the slider in the dialog box.

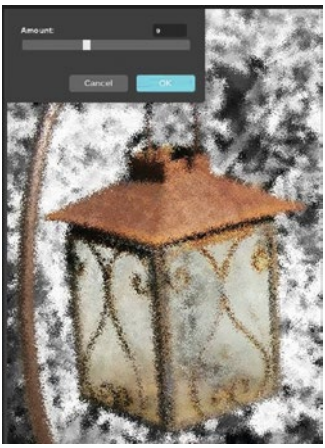

Figure 3-50. *The Diffuse filter*

9. **Scanlines**—Creates the effect of the image being displayed on a CRT display (Figure 3-51). The strength of the effect is controlled by the slider on the dialog box, and there is a Horizontal option available.

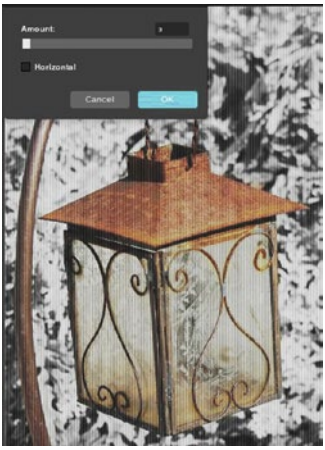

Figure 3-51. *The Scanlines filter*

10. **Halftone**—Mimics the effect of a photographic image printed on an offset printer characterized by the dots (Figure 3-52). Various aspects of the filter are controlled in the dialog box.

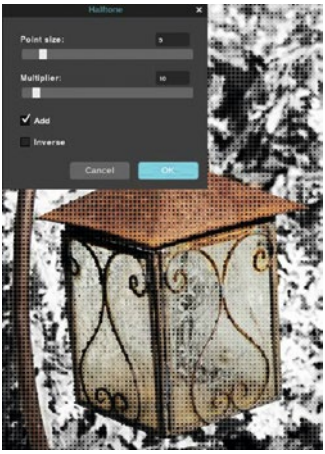

Figure 3-52. *The Halftone filter*

11. **Pixelate**—Applies an effect that enlarges the pixels of the image to obscure detail or create a digitized look (Figure 3-53).

Figure 3-53. *The Pixelate filter*

12. **Pointinize**—Divides the image into equally spaced dots, squares, large circles, or small circles using the dialog box (Figure 3-54).

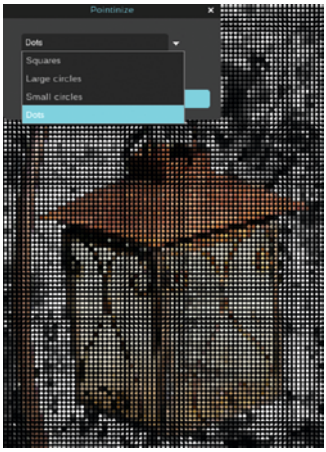

Figure 3-54. *The Pointinize filter*

13. **Water Swirl**—Applies a distortion, making the image appear to be submerged in water (Figure 3-55). The Amount and Size options are controlled by sliders in the dialog box, and there is an option box for horizontal waves.

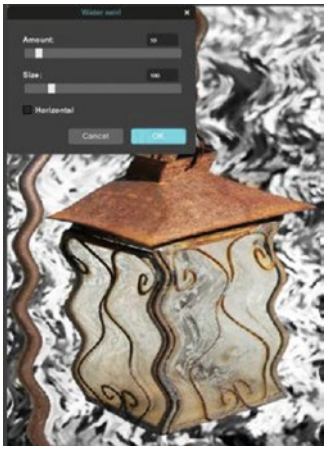

Figure 3-55. *The Water Swirl filter*

14. **Polar Coordinates**—Twirls the image from its original state to polar coordinates. The example shown (Figure 3-56) has Rect (rectangle) set to polar. The other settings are Polar to rect and Invert in circle.

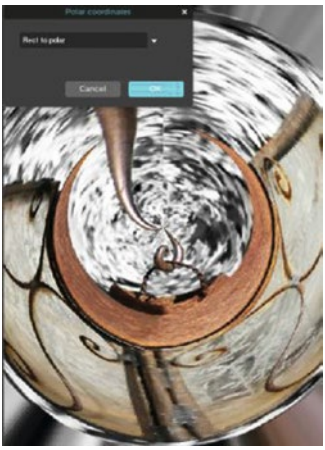

Figure 3-56. *The Polar Coordinates filter*

15. **Kaleidoscope**—Creates a kaleidoscope-like pattern from the image (Figure 3-57). The Size, Horizontal, and Vertical settings are controlled using the sliders in the dialog box.

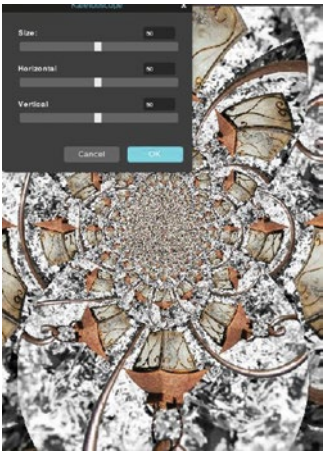

Figure 3-57. *The Kaleidoscope filter*

16. **Tilt Shift**—Simulates a photographic technique involving selective focus, making the scene appear as a miniature model set (Figure 3-58). The Focus, Size, and Location settings are controlled by sliders in the dialog box, and a Saturate (that boosts color intensity) checkbox is provided.

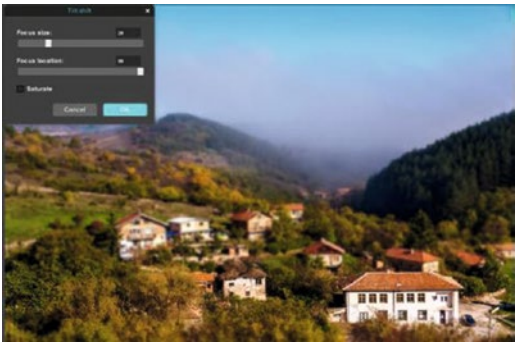

Figure 3-58. *The Tilt Shift filter*

17. **Vignette**—Simulates a photographic technique that obscures the sides and corners of the image. This technique is commonly used in portrait photography (Figure 3-59). The size of the vignette is controlled by the slider in the dialog box, and the color of the vignette can be changed using the Color Selector.

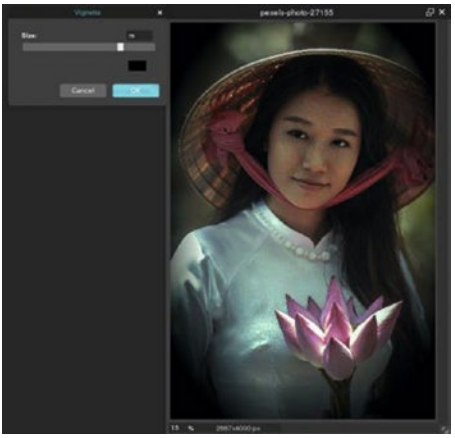

Figure 3-59. *The Vignette filter*

18. **Pastels**—Applies an artistic effect to the image, simulating the look of having been drawn pastels (Figure 3-60). The size of the strokes is controlled by the slider in the dialog box, and the Invert option checkbox switches some of the lightest pixels to dark.

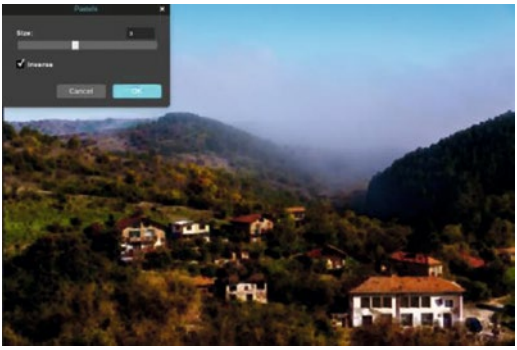

Figure 3-60. *The Pastes filter applies an effect similar to pastels*

19. **Glamour Glow**—Increases contrast and softens focus slightly to help add smoothness and radiance to the skin (Figure 3-61).

Figure 3-61. *The Glamour Glow filter*

20. **Mimic HDR**—Simulates High Dynamic Range photography, which results in a higher range of dynamic luminosity throughout the image (Figure 3-62).

Figure 3-62. *The Mimic HDR filter simulates high dynamic range photography*

21. **Hope**—Simulates the artistic style (Figure 3-63) used by artist Shepard Fairey to create the image of President Barrack Obama on the famous 2008 campaign poster titled Hope.

Figure 3-63. *The Hope filter*

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22. **Art Poster**—Creates a stylized effect from the image using large areas of solid color (Figure 3-64). The amount of the effect applied and the color is controlled by the sliders in the dialog box. An Invert option (reverses colors and tones) is provided.

Figure 3-64. *The Art Poster filter*

23. **Heat Map**—Applies an effect to the image, giving it the appearance of a thermogram (Figure 3-65). The strength of the effect is controlled by the slider in the dialog box.

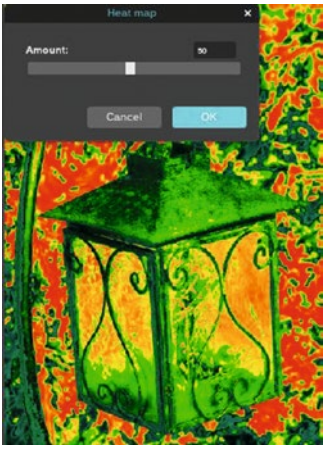

Figure 3-65. *The Heat Map filter*

24. **Tri Tone**—Applies three color values to the highlights, midtones, and shadows of the image (Figure 3-66). The effect can be changed by using the Color Selector dialog box.

Figure 3-66. *The Tri Tone filter*

25. **Night Vision**—Simulates the effect of viewing the image through an image intensifier used in low-light conditions (Figure 3-67). The Gain and Noise settings are controlled using the sliders in the dialog box.

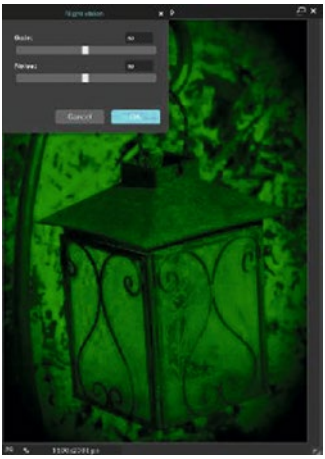

Figure 3-67. *The Night Vision filter*

26. **Emboss**—Simulates the effect of viewing the image standing out as a relief (Figure 3-68).

Figure 3-68. *The Emboss filter*

27. **Engrave**—Simulates the effect of viewing the image engraved on a hard object (Figure 3-69).

Figure 3-69. *The Engrave filter*

28. **Find Edges**—Finds the edges in the image and creates a neon-like effect (Figure 3-70).

Figure 3-70. *The Find Edges filter*

The View Menu

The View menu (Figure 3-71) provides several options for zooming in on the image, as well as viewing the Navigator, Layer, and History palettes (among others).

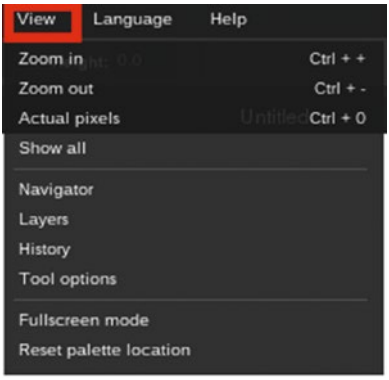

Figure 3-71. *The View menu*

Here's a look at the options available from the View menu:

- **Zoom In** (Control++)—Magnifies the image one level.
- **Zoom Out** (Control+-)—Zooms out from the image one level.
- **Actual Pixels** (Control+0)—Displays the image at a one image pixel to one monitor pixel ratio.

- **Show All** (no shortcut)—Displays the image in its entirety within the workspace.
- **Navigator** (no shortcut)—Displays or hides the Navigator Palette.
- **Layers** (no shortcut)—Displays or hides the Layers Palette.
- **History** (no shortcut)—Displays or hides the History Palette.

■ **Note** We covered at the Navigator, Layers, and History Palettes in Chapter 1.

- **Tool Options** (no shortcut)—Displays available options for the active tool.
- **Fullscreen Mode** (no shortcut)—The Pixlr Editor workspace occupies the entire monitor for maximum image display. To exit the fullscreen mode, press the Escape key.
- **Reset Palette Location** (no shortcut)—Places the palettes to their default positions if they've been moved.

■ **Note** Because Pixlr Editor is browser-based, some shortcuts may be overridden by the browser's preset shortcuts.

The Language Menu

Pixlr Editor supports 28 different languages. The choices are shown in the Language menu (Figure 3-72).

Figure 3-72. *The Language menu*

The following languages are supported by Pixlr Editor:

- English
- Spanish
- German
- French
- Greek
- Arabic
- Brazilian
- Russian
- Ukrainian
- Hebrew
- Croatian
- Italian
- Romanian
- Dutch
- Swedish

- Danish
- Finnish
- Slovenian
- Czech
- Turkish
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Indonesian
- Simplified Chinese
- Traditional Chinese
- Thai
- Japanese
- Korean

The Help Menu

The Pixlr Editor Help menu offers several avenues for obtaining help should you need it (Figure 3-73).

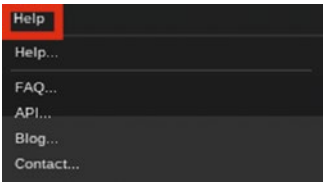

Figure 3-73. *The Help menu*

The following options are offered in the Help menu:

- **Help, FAQ, and API**—Link to the Pixlr support page at `https://support.pixlr.com/hc/en-us`. From there, you can navigate using the corresponding link to the page you want to open.
- **Blog**—Links to the Pixlr Blog at `http://pixlr.com/blog/`. This is where you can connect with other users for help and tips.
- **Contact**—Allows you to submit a request for help via e-mail to the support team.

The Login/Sign Up Menu

This area is for users with a Pixlr account to log in, and for those who don't to sign up for one if desired. When you log in, the dialog box opens with textboxes to enter your e-mail and password, or to sign in with Google (Figure 3-74).

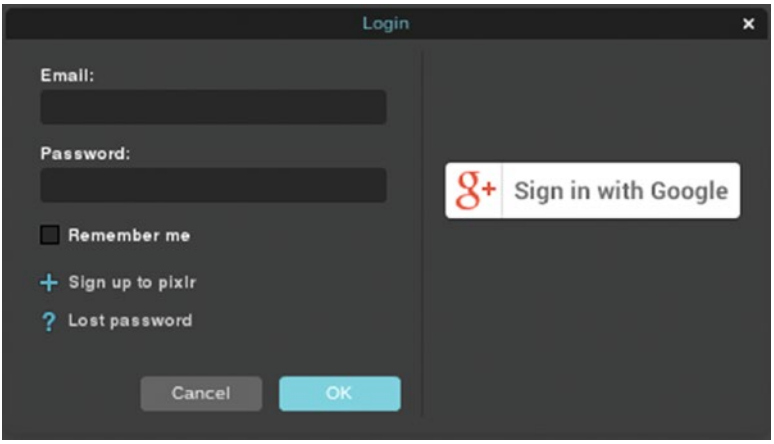

Figure 3-74. *The Login dialog box*

Pixlr Editor can be used without an account, but you'll only be able save images to your computer or external storage device. Keeping your images in the library offers the advantage of accessing them from any computer with an Internet connection. This can also prevent their loss in case of a hard drive failure.

To sign up, simply enter your name and e-mail address, and then create a password (Figure 3-75).

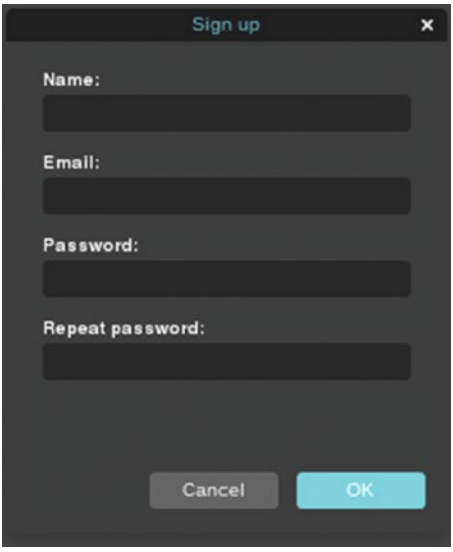

Figure 3-75. *The Sign Up dialog box*

Summary

In this chapter, we covered a lot of ground by exploring all of the functions contained in the menu bar. Many of the functions you'll need in order to edit images are accessed from here.

This concludes Part I of this book—you had a thorough look at the Pixlr Editor workspace, tools, menu bar, and palettes. In the next chapter beginning in Part II, you'll learn some image editing basics by learning how to compose good photos before pressing the shutter button, and how to improve composition in photos using Pixlr Editor.

PART II

Working With Images

CHAPTER 4

Composing Images

This chapter looks at making images look their best by using techniques for optimum composition. Here's what you'll learn:

- *Start Out by Taking Well Composed Photos*: In this portion, we'll take a look at composing the image before the shutter is clicked.
- *Using the Rule of Thirds*: This part provides a basic guide to using the "rule of thirds".
- *Cropping*: In this tutorial, we'll learn to use the Crop tool effectively.
- *Straightening Crooked Images*: In this tutorial, we'll learn how to straighten crooked images using Pixlr Editor.
- *Correcting Perspective*: In this tutorial, we'll learn how to improve an image that suffer from distortion problems.
- *Standard Photo Print Sizes*: Discusses optimal resolution for achieving good print results and provides a guide for converting width and height measured in pixels to standard print sizes in inches.

Start Out by Taking Well Composed Photos

These days, just about everyone has a camera in some form—just think of the countless snapshots people capture using smart phones. Many people just point and shoot to capture an image on impulse (which can make for great photography, but sometimes that just requires good luck).

You can capture an otherwise great picture, but there may be unwanted objects or clutter in the background rendering your picture less than ideal. Pixlr Editor is a great tool for correcting such problems. However, capturing the image without the distractions and clutter will save you a lot of time and effort.

You'll notice the image on the left in Figure 4-1 has several objects in the background making it appear cluttered. Pixlr Editor is a great tool for digitally removing clutter, as shown in the image on the right. Of course, using a clutter-free background is always the best option when possible. We'll look at removing objects using Pixlr Editor in Chapter 8.

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P. Whitt, *Beginning Pixlr Editor*, DOI 10.1007/978-1-4842-2698-8_4

Figure 4-1. *Pixlr Editor is a great tool for digital clutter removal*

In Figure 4-2, a different background location was chosen in front of the same house (not perfect, but the best available at the location). Because there's no clutter here, no digital cleanup is required, which is a huge time-saver.

Figure 4-2. *Using a clutter-free background eliminates the need for digital clutter removal*

Using the Rule of Thirds

The "rule of thirds" is a general rule of composition used in photography. It uses a grid composed of nine square or rectangular units. The points where the lines intersect are used for positioning the elements of main interest.

In Figure 4-3, the image of the lifeguard shack is positioned using the guides—placing it off-center creates greater visual interest than if it were placed dead center in the image.

Figure 4-3. *The intersecting points are used to help position elements of interest*

Using the rule of thirds as a guide is helpful when composing landscape or seascape images. Generally, the horizon line is placed either in the upper or lower third of the grid. As you can see in Figure 4-4, the horizon line is positioned near the upper third of the grid because the foreground is the primary area of interest. Notice also where the cloud meets the peak rests along the left vertical line.

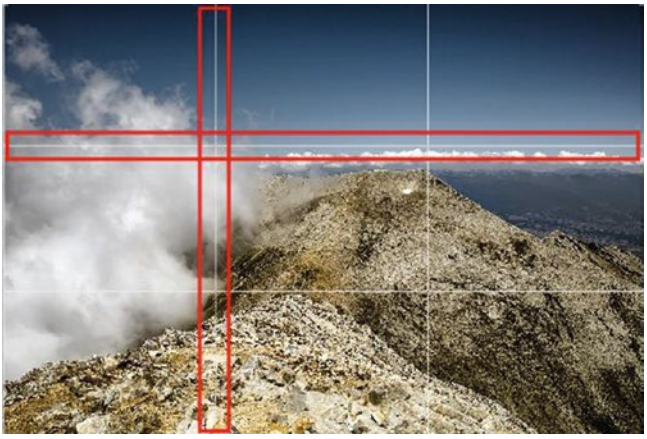

Figure 4-4. *The horizon line is placed near the upper horizontal third of the grid, and where the cloud meets the peak is near the left vertical third*

The rule of thirds is a useful guide for photographing people as well. In Figure 4-5, the man is positioned along the right vertical guideline, with his eyes along the upper horizontal guideline.

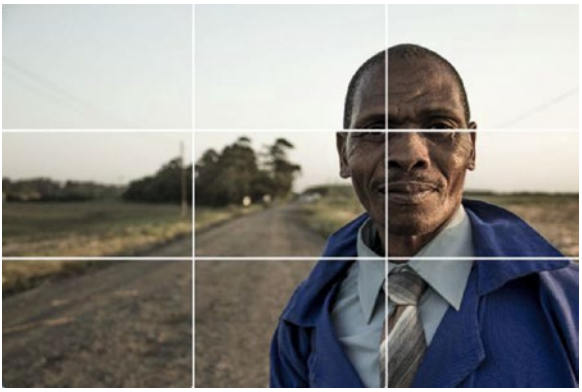

Figure 4-5. *The rule of thirds is helpful for composing interesting portraits of people*

You may be asking yourself if there are times you wouldn't use the rule of thirds. Like most rules, there are times when it's better to ignore it. In Figure 4-6, the image of the mountains and their reflections calls for symmetry and balance. In this case, using the horizontal axis as the guide results in a visually compelling image.

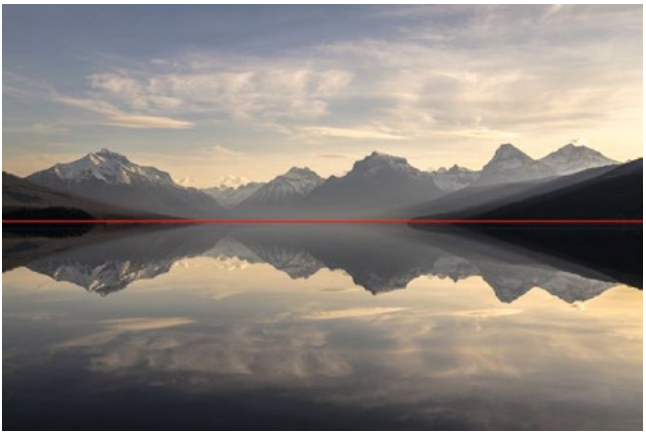

Figure 4-6. *In this image, symmetry trumps the rule of thirds*

■ **Note** Pixlr Editor displays a “rule of thirds” grid when using the Crop tool to help with better composition when trimming images.

TUTORIAL 1: CROPPING AN IMAGE

Trimming Away Excess Image Data

Sometimes, you just have to capture a good picture when the opportunity is there. Because you have to act quickly, the downside is you might capture unwanted objects or people along with it.

In this tutorial, you’ll use the Crop tool to better compose the image following the “rule of thirds”.

1. Open the image titled `Ch04_Little Girl.jpg` found in the `Ch04 Practice Images` folder.
2. Upon looking at the photo, it’s easy to see that there are feet and legs in the background (Figure 4-7).

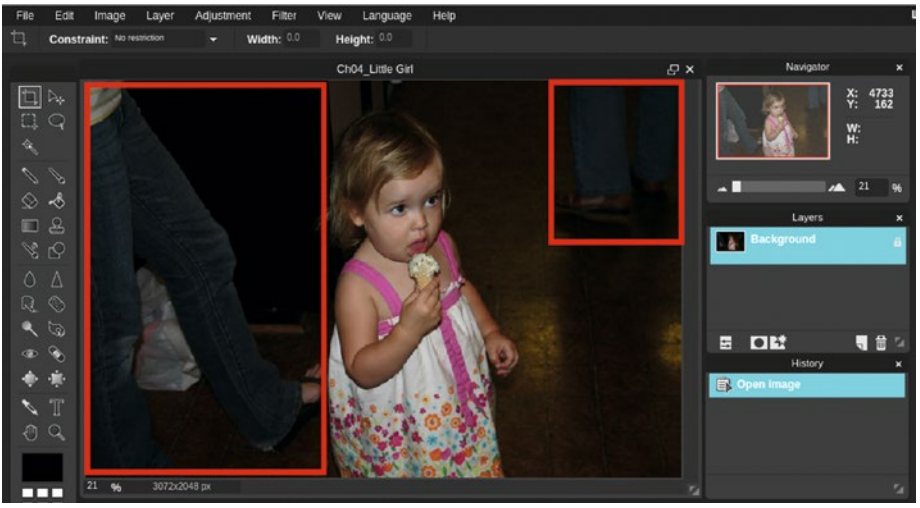

Figure 4-7. *Legs and feet in the background of the image*

3. Click the Crop tool or press C on your keyboard.
4. Click and drag to orient the picture in a portrait (vertical) format. Use the Crop tool’s grid to position as shown in Figure 4-8. The little girl should be off-center.

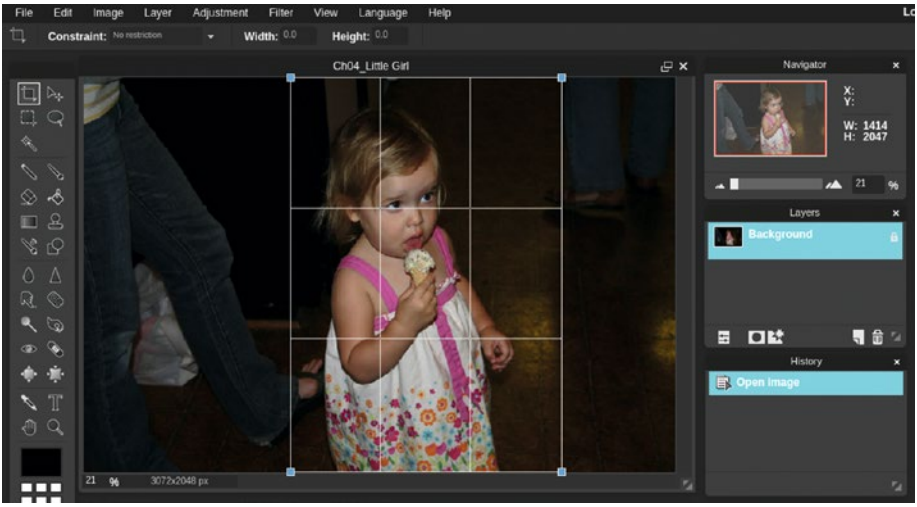

Figure 4-8. *Use the Crop tool's grid to position as shown*

5. Once in position, activate the Crop tool by double-clicking in the image or pressing Enter on your keyboard.

6. Create a new layer (Layer ➤ New Layer) and rename it `Clone`. This is done by double-clicking in the layer thumbnail's textbox (Figure 4-9).

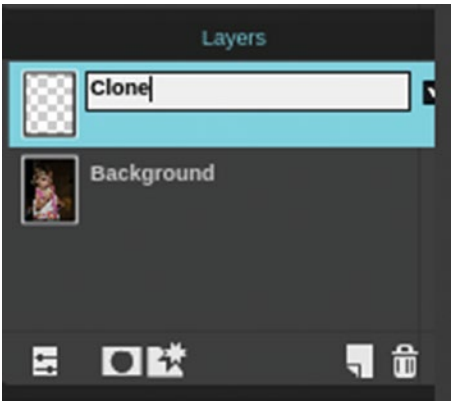

Figure 4-9. *Double-click in the layer's textbox to rename it*

7. Click the Clone Stamp tool icon or press the letter S on your keyboard. Choose a soft brush between 50-70 pixels in diameter.

8. Click the Sample All Layers checkbox in the Tool options bar. This allows you to clone image data on this separate layer rather than directly on the background layer.

9. Click the Clone layer to make sure it is active and use the Clone Stamp tool to remove the leg, foot, and shadow (Figure 4-10).

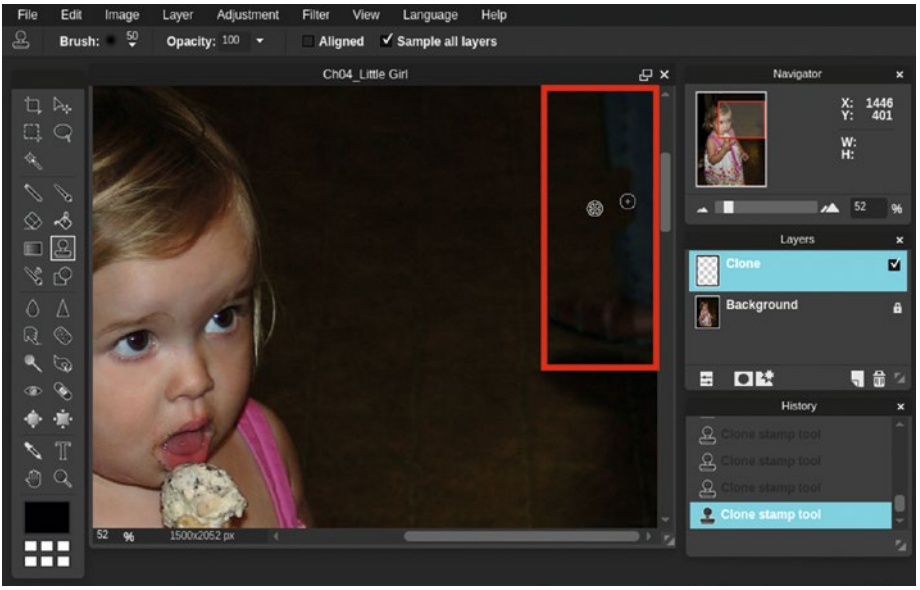

Figure 4-10. *Use the Clone Stamp tool to remove the legs and feet in the background*

10. Clone on the left side to remove the foot next to the little girl.

11. Figure 4-11 shows the before and after comparison. When finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image by a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 4-11. *Before and after comparison*

TUTORIAL 2: STRAIGHTENING AN IMAGE

Use Free Transform to Correct a Crooked Image

The Free Transform function is very useful for straightening images with a tilt. In this tutorial, we'll correct an image of an old church.

1. Open the image titled `Ch04_Church.jpg` found in the `Ch04 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Activate the Free Transform function (Edit ➤ Free transform, or press Control+T) and position the cursor around the upper-right corner of the image until a curved arrow icon appears.
4. Click and drag, moving the duplicate layer slightly clockwise until the eave of the roof is level (Figure 4-12).

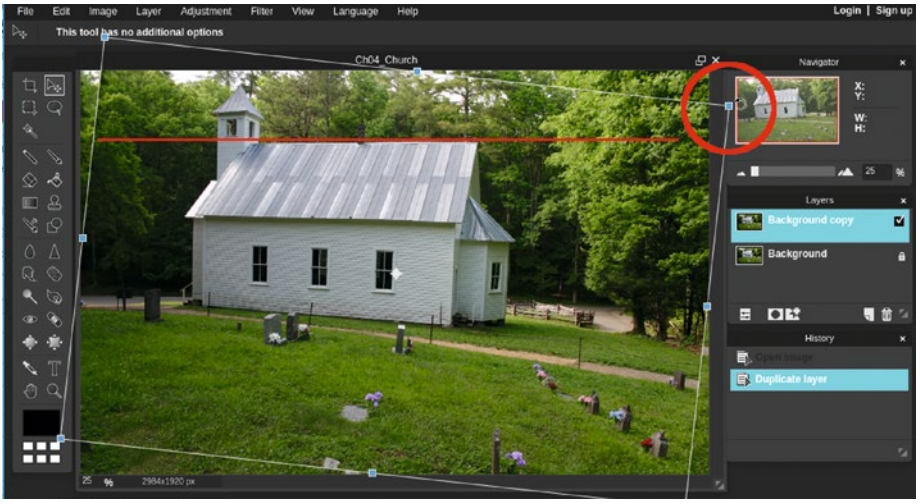

Figure 4-12. *Rotate the layer slightly until level*

5. Create a new layer (Layer ➤ New Layer) and rename it `Clone` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
6. Click the Clone Stamp tool icon or press the letter S on your keyboard. Check the Sample All Layers option.
7. Choose a soft brush between 50-70 pixels in diameter.
8. When the layer was straightened, some of the background layer became visible and is noticeable (like a seam).
9. Clone the areas indicated in the upper left and right to make a smooth transition, as well as the partial image of the car (left side) and the area in the lower-left corner (Figure 4-13).

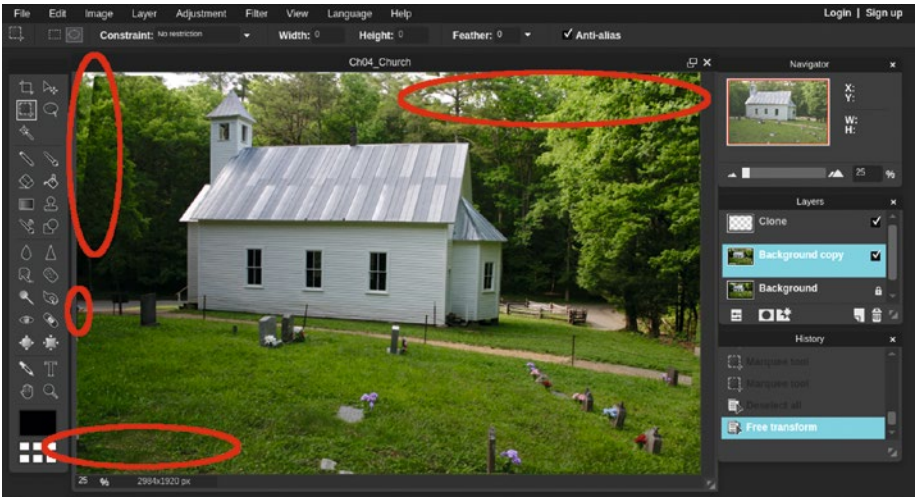

Figure 4-13. *Use the Clone Stamp tool to cover the noticeable areas of the underlying layer*

10. Figure 4-14 shows the before and after comparison. When finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 4-14. *Before and after comparison*

TUTORIAL 3: CORRECTING PERSPECTIVE

Use Free Distort to Correct an Image with Perspective Problems

The Free Distort function can be useful for correcting images that suffer from camera lens distortion or perspective issues.

1. Open the image titled `Ch04_Perspective Correction.jpg` found in the `Ch04 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Activate the Free Distort function (Edit ➤ Free Distort).
4. Drag the upper corners of the bounding box to the positions shown in Figure 4-15.

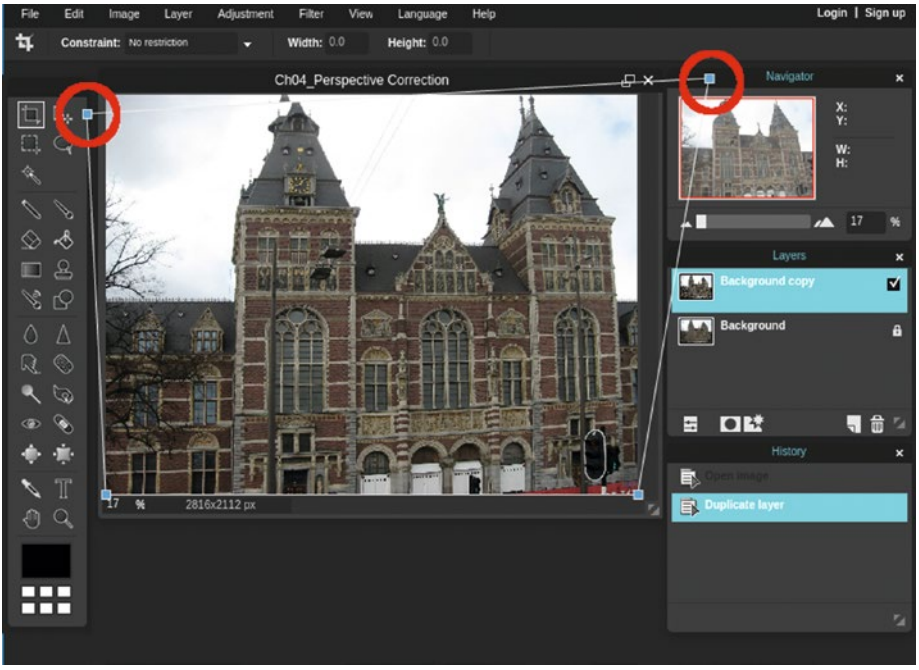

Figure 4-15. *Drag the upper corners of the bounding box into position as shown*

5. Nudge the lower-right corner of the bounding box down very slightly (Figure 4-16).

Figure 4-16. *Drag the right corner of the bounding box to the position shown*

6. Create a new layer (Layer ➤ New Layer) and rename it `Clone` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
7. Click the Lasso tool icon or press the letter L on your keyboard. Click the Polygonal Lasso option checkbox.
8. Make a triangular selection above the left peak (Figure 4-17). The Clone Stamp tool will be used to fill it in. Zoom in as necessary.

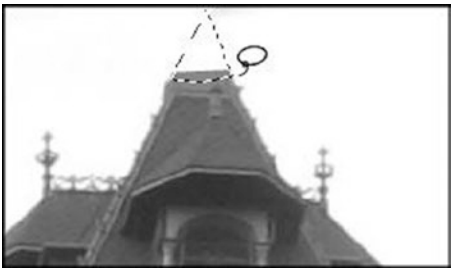

Figure 4-17. *The triangular area will be filled in to complete the peak*

9. Click the Clone Stamp tool icon or press the letter S on your keyboard. Check the Sample All Layers option.
10. Choose a soft brush 20 pixels in diameter.
11. Sample the peak from the underlying layer and use the Clone Stamp tool to fill in the selection on the layer named `Clone`.
12. When finished, press Control+D to deactivate the selection.
13. Use the Clone Stamp tool to fill in the peak (Figure 4-18).

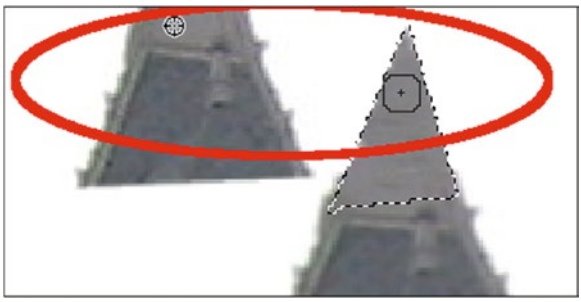

Figure 4-18. *Use the Clone Stamp tool to fill in the selection*

14. Use the Clone Stamp tool to finish by removing the seam (Figure 4-19).

Figure 4-19. *Use the Clone Stamp tool to remove the appearance of the peak and seam from underlying layer*

15. Figure 4-20 shows the before and after comparison. When finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may want you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 4-20. *Before and after comparison*

Printing Standard Photo Sizes

Pixlr Editor was designed to output images for digital display, but it is possible to output them to your inkjet printer or have your local photo lab print them.

However, it's important to work with an image of sufficient resolution. How much is enough? An image opened from a URL will likely be too small to obtain a good print from. If you scan photos with a flatbed scanner, scan at least at a setting of 300 PPI (pixels per inch). If you're starting with a small original and plan to print it larger, use your scanner's software to enlarge it to the desired target size.

Generally, transparencies such as slides and negatives must be scanned at higher resolutions than photographs when they are to be printed.

Most modern digital cameras capture 16 megapixels at least, providing enough data for good prints (when using the highest quality setting).

■ **Note** When outputting images as JPEG files using Pixlr Editor, it's a good idea to set the quality at 100% before saving.

Because an image opened in Pixlr Editor is measured in pixels, I've provided a guide to help convert from pixels to inches (Table 4-1).

Table 4-1. *Conversion of Image Size from Pixels to Print Size in Inches*

Image Size (Pixels)	Print Size (Inches)
1050 X 1500	3.5 X 5
1200 X 1200	4 X 4
1200 X 1500	4 X 5
1200 X 1800	4 X 6
1500 X 2100	5 X 7
2400 X 3000	8 X 10

Summary

This chapter covered several basic techniques for achieving good image composition. Paying attention to the background while composing the image can eliminate clutter that might have to be digitally removed later. The "rule of thirds" is a widely accepted guide for making images more interesting.

The tutorials showed how to crop an image to make it look its best, use Free Transform to correct a crooked image, and use Free Distort to correct an image with perspective distortion.

This chapter also touched on the fact that to print an image, it's important to make sure it has sufficient resolution. A guide converting dimensions from pixels to several standard print sizes is provided.

The next chapter covers using a variety of ways to correct image tonality.

CHAPTER 5

Improving Image Tonality

This chapter looks at correcting problems such as poor contrast and exposure issues. Here's what will be covered:

- *Common Tonal Problems*: In this part, we'll look at the most common tonal problems in photographic images.
- *Using the Brightness and Contrast Adjustment*: In this part, we'll take a look at how to improve tonality using this tool.
- *Using Exposure*: In this part, we look at how using the Exposure adjustment improves a dark, underexposed image.
- *The Levels Adjustment*: The Levels dialog box is a powerful (and fairly complex) tool used for image tonality adjustments. This part takes a close look at how it works.
- *The Curves Adjustment*: The Curves dialog box is another powerful, complex tool used for image tonality adjustments. This part takes a close look at how it works.
- *Improving Exposure Using Layer Modes*: This section looks at how image exposure can be improved by using two different layer blending modes.
- *Local Tonal Adjustments Using the Dodge and Burn Tools*: This section looks at how image tonality can be improved in parts of an image using these tools.

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Common Tonal Problems

Tonal problems are very common not only in casual photography, but in older images that have degraded over time. In many cases, a simple quick fix is all that's needed to correct the image. In other cases, you'll need to use more powerful adjustments such as Levels or Curves.

Tonal problems usually fall under one of the following descriptions:

- Low contrast (dull and flat)
- Underexposed (too dark)
- Mixed tonality (good exposure in some areas, poor exposure in others)
- Overexposed (too bright)

The rest of this chapter shows you various methods describing how to correct these issues using the adjustments (tutorials accompany some of them).

Using the Brightness & Contrast Adjustment Dialog Box

Tonal problems are very common not only in casual photography, but in older images that have degraded over time. In many cases, a simple quick fix is all that's needed to correct the image.

■ **Note** Just as you would compose an image in the best way possible before clicking the shutter button, it's also a good practice to follow your camera's user manual guidelines on how to achieve the best exposure before shooting the picture.

The Brightness & Contrast adjustment is a basic tonal correction tool designed for making quick corrections. It doesn't offer the precise control found in the Levels and Curves dialog boxes, but will work well for many types of images with contrast problems. The image shown in Figure 5-1 is washed out and lacking in contrast.

Figure 5-1. *This image is lacking in contrast*

Now the image is opened in Pixlr Editor, and by using the Brightness & Contrast dialog box (Adjustment ➤ Brightness & Contrast), the image is improved by setting the Brightness to -15 and the Contrast to 35 (Figure 5-2).

Figure 5-2. *The tonal quality of this image is improved using the Brightness & Contrast adjustment*

Using the Exposure Adjustment Dialog Box

The Exposure adjustment is a useful function for making quick improvements in underexposed images. The inside of an old church turned out underexposed in this image (Figure 5-3).

Figure 5-3. *The image of this old church is underexposed*

By setting Exposure adjustment to 30, the image is quickly improved, and more detail is revealed (Figure 5-4). The Exposure adjustment ranges from 0-50.

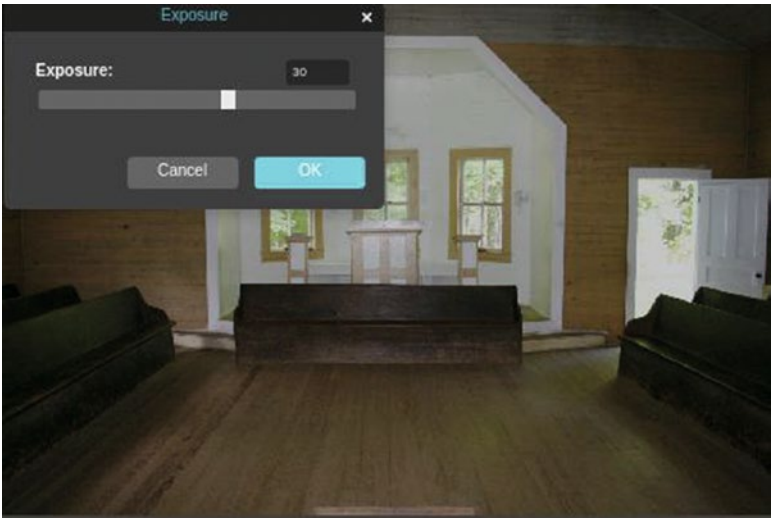

Figure 5-4. *The Exposure adjustment quickly improves this underexposed image*

The Levels Adjustment Dialog Box

The Levels dialog box allows you to make an image lighter or darker, or to change the contrast. It offers more precise control than the Brightness & Contrast adjustment. Color corrections can also be made using Levels, which we'll look at in detail Chapter 6.

The Levels dialog box displays a *histogram,* which is a graphical representation of the pixel brightness values ranging from 0 (pure black) to 255 (pure white).

The tonal information of the black and white (grayscale) image of the car is mapped in the histogram shown in Figure 5-5. All of the darkest pixels are contained in the left portion of the histogram, the middle range pixels are in the center portion, and the lightest pixels are in the right portion.

Figure 5-5. *The tonal information of this image is mapped in the histogram*

TUTORIAL 4: TONAL CORRECTION USING LEVELS

Improving Contrast in a Dull Image

The Levels adjustment is very useful for correcting tonality in images. In this tutorial, Levels will be used to remap the tonality to improve the contrast in a dull and flat image.

1. Open the image titled `Ch05_Lady and Baby.jpg` found in the `Ch05 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Rename the duplicate layer `Contrast Fix` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.

4. Open the Levels dialog box (Adjustment ➤ Levels). Note that most of the tonal information is clustered in the midtones range of the histogram—the dark and light ranges are lacking.

5. In the Input Levels window, move the left black point slider toward the center where the histogram data begins—repeat this process moving the right white point slider toward the histogram data (Figure 5-6). Click OK when you're done.

Figure 5-6. *Moving the black and white point sliders remaps the tonality in the image to improve contrast*

Now the image is has much better contrast, as seen in the before and after comparison (Figure 5-7). When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 5-7. *Before and after comparison*

Using the Levels Mid Point Slider

In the previous tutorial, the contrast was improved by using the black point and white point sliders to remap the tonality. These sliders make adjustments to the darkest and lightest ranges in the image.

The mid point slider (also called the *gamma* slider) is useful for revealing detail in images that are moderately underexposed. The mid point slider produces results similar to those that the Exposure adjustment dialog box does.

TUTORIAL 5: EXPOSURE CORRECTION USING LEVELS

Improving an Underexposed Image

This tutorial involves only a couple of slight adjustments, but they make a noticeable difference.

1. Open the image titled `Ch05_Little Grand Canyon.jpg` found in the `Ch05 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Rename the duplicate layer `Exposure Fix` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Open the Levels dialog box (Adjustment ➤ Levels). Note that most of the tonal information is clustered in the darker range of the histogram.
5. In the Input Levels window, move the white point slider toward the point where the histogram data begins (the numeric value should read 243). Move the mid point slider slightly to the left until the numeric value reads 0.8 (Figure 5-8). Click OK when you're done.

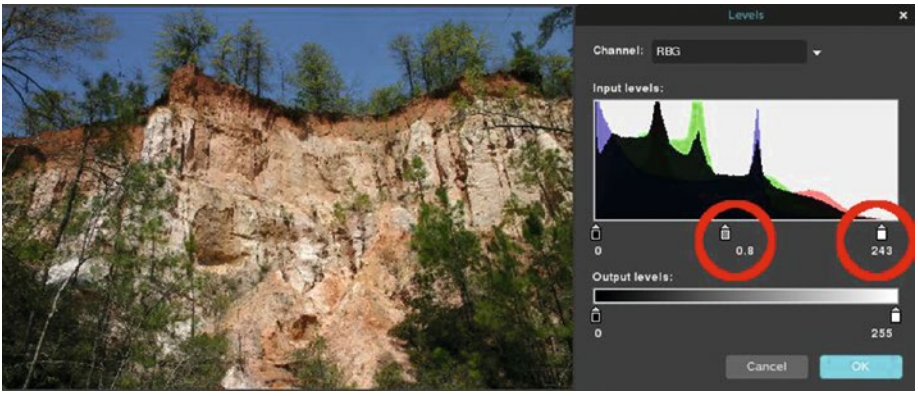

Figure 5-8. *Making a slight exposure correction using the white point and mid point sliders*

Now the image is a bit lighter—note a little more detail is revealed in the darker areas of the image (Figure 5-9). When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 5-9. *Before and after comparison*

The Curves Adjustment Dialog Box

The Curves dialog box is a powerful function that allows you to make precision adjustments in your image. Depending on the type of adjustment being made, the diagonal line is moved in specific areas, or parts of the line can be anchored to prevent changes in certain parts of the image (Figure 5-10).

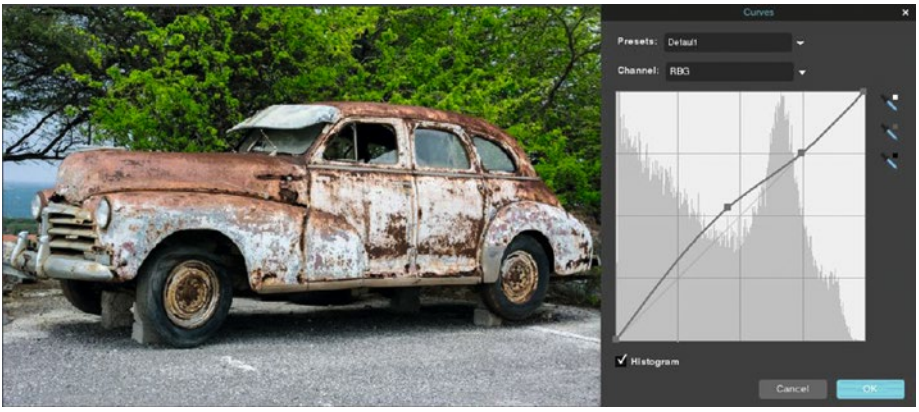

Figure 5-10. *Adjustments are made by moving the diagonal line in specific areas*

By default, the histogram is not shown, but you can display it by checking the Histogram option box (which I recommend, since the histogram is a "map" of the tonal information).

TUTORIAL 6: TONAL CORRECTION USING CURVES

Improving Contrast in a Dull Image

In this tutorial, the contrast of a tonally flat image will be boosted with a commonly used method in the world of image editing known as an "S" curve.

1. Open the image titled `Ch05_Flat Cat.jpg` found in the `Ch05 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Rename the duplicate layer `Contrast Fix` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Open the Curves dialog box (Adjustment ➤ Curves). Check the Histogram option box.
5. Note that most of the tonal information is clustered in the mid range area of the histogram.
6. Click in the center of the grid to place an anchor point (Figure 5-11). *Do not* click OK just yet.

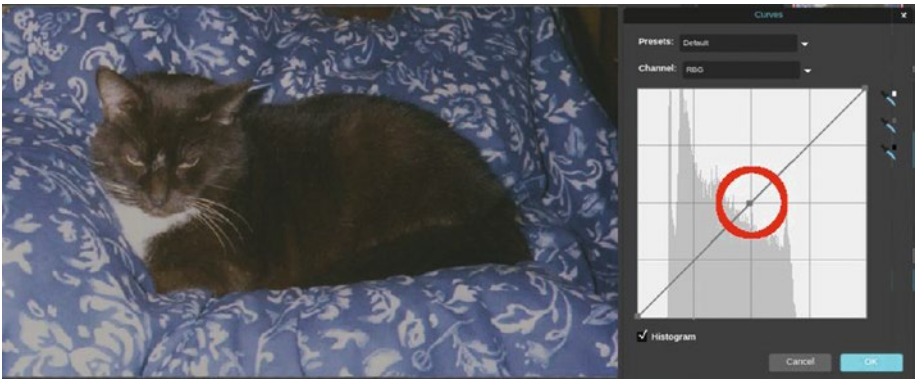

Figure 5-11. *Click the center to place an anchor point*

7. Now, place points on the line and move as shown in Figure 5-12 (note that it bears a slight resemblance to the letter "S"). Click OK when you're done.

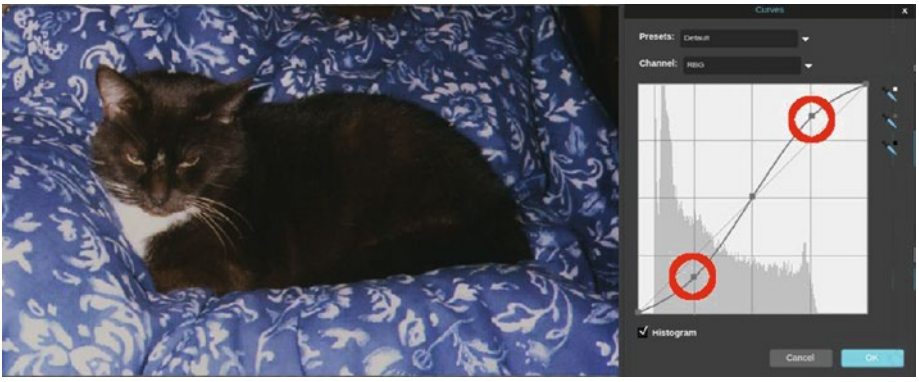

Figure 5-12. *Contrast is improved using an "S" curve*

■ **Note** The purpose of this tutorial is to get you accustomed to making manual adjustments using Curves. However, there is an Increase Contrast setting in the Curves presets. Some of the Curves presets will be covered in more depth in Chapter 6.

Now the contrast is boosted and the image is improved (Figure 5-13). When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 5-13. *Before and after comparison*

TUTORIAL 7: PARTIAL EXPOSURE CORRECTION USING CURVES

Improving an Image with Mixed Tonality

In this tutorial, Curves will be used to create a fill flash effect. It will lighten the harsh, darker areas of the image while not affecting the lighter areas.

1. Open the image titled `Ch05_Hiker at Rest.jpg` found in the `Ch05 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Rename the duplicate layer `Exposure Fix` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Open the Curves dialog box (Adjustment ➤ Curves). Check the Histogram option box. Note that most of the tonal information is clustered in the mid range and dark range areas of the histogram.
5. Place anchor points along the line, as shown in Figure 5-14. This will "lock down" the pixels in the lighter-to-lightest range of the image. *Do not* click OK just yet.

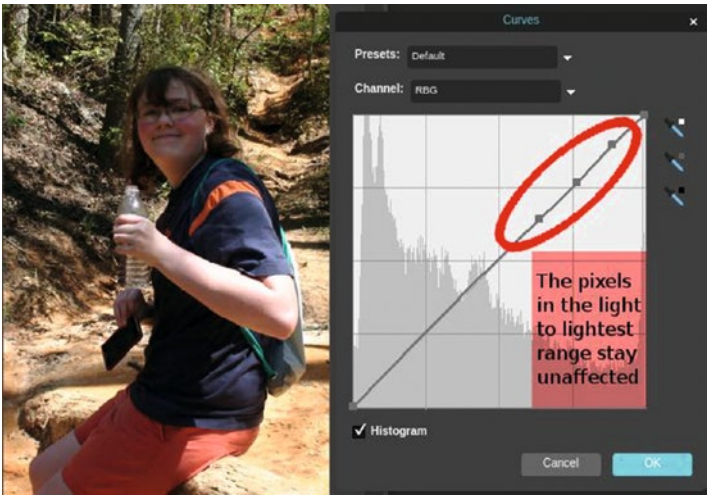

Figure 5-14. *Placing this anchor point "locks down" the light to lightest pixels*

6. Click on the line and pull upward to form a bow shape, as shown in Figure 5-15. Click OK when you're done.

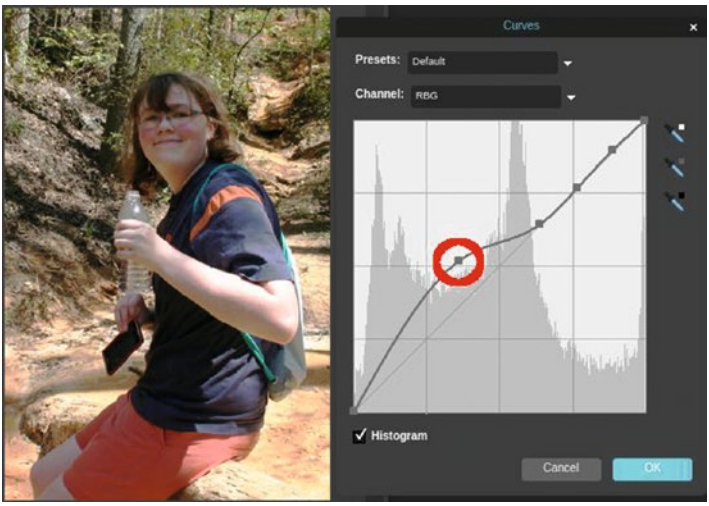

Figure 5-15. *Making this adjustment reduces the harsher dark areas*

The effect reduces the harsh shadows, while keeping the lighter areas from washing out (Figure 5-16). When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

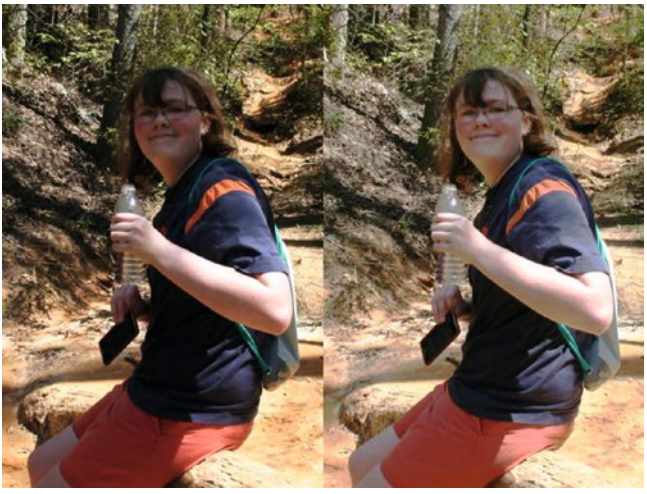

Figure 5-16. *Before and after comparison*

■ **Note** In the next chapter, we'll look at the commands (represented by eyedropper icons in the Curves dialog box) to set the white, gray, and black points for color-correcting an image.

Improving Exposure Using Layer Modes

Using layer modes (particularly Multiply and Screen) can be useful for quickly correcting images that are overexposed or underexposed.

Figure 5-17 is an example of a slightly overexposed image.

Figure 5-17. *A slightly overexposed scenic image*

By duplicating the background layer and changing the mode to Multiply, the image is much less washed out. The layer's opacity was lowered to 80% to achieve the result shown in Figure 5-18.

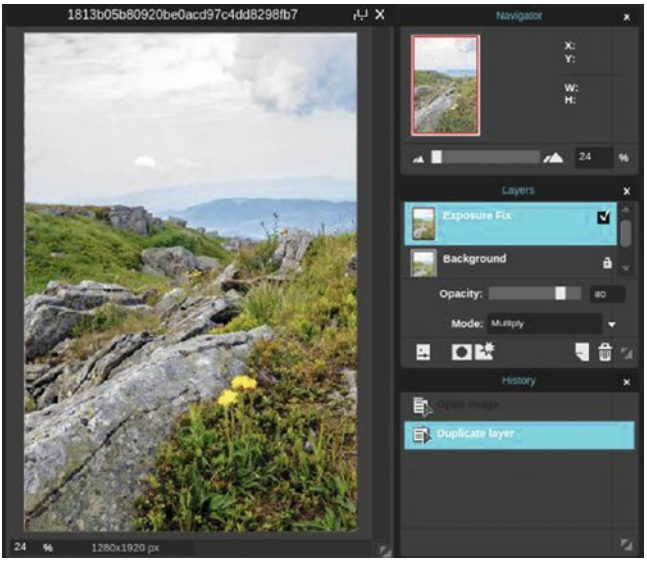

Figure 5-18. *The overexposed image corrected using the Multiply layer mode*

TUTORIAL 8: EXPOSURE CORRECTION USING THE SCREEN LAYER MODE

Improving an Underexposed Image

Just as using the Multiply layer mode improved the overexposed image, the Screen mode can improve underexposed images.

1. Open the image titled `Ch05_Dark Ship.jpg` found in the `Ch05 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Rename the duplicate layer `Exposure Fix` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.

4. Change the layer mode to Screen. This is done by clicking Toggle Layer settings, then changing the mode from Normal to Screen (Figure 5-19).

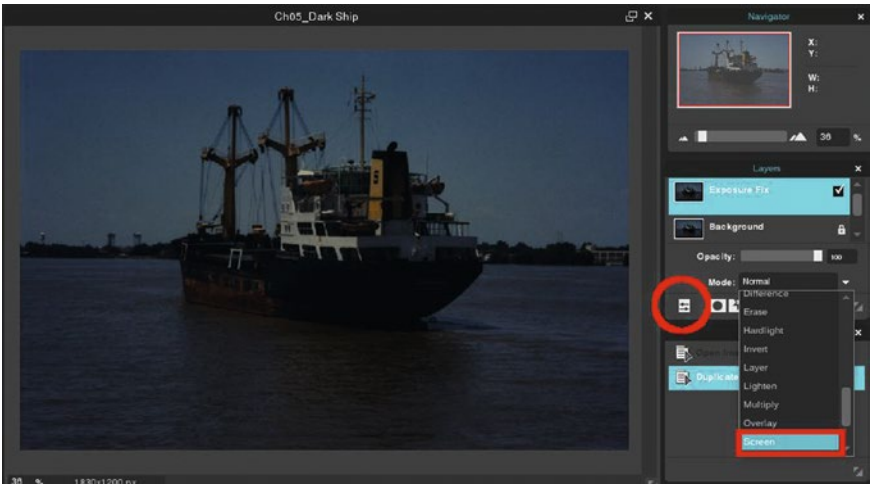

Figure 5-19. *Changing the layer mode from Normal to Screen*

5. This image is better, but will need further correction. Duplicate the Exposure Fix layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer) two times. Lower the opacity of the top layer to 50% (Figure 5-20).

Figure 5-20. *Duplicate the layer named Exposure Fix twice, then lower the opacity to 50% on the uppermost layer copy*

The exposure of this image now looks more like it should (Figure 5-21). When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).

Figure 5-21. *Before and after comparison*

Local Tonal Adjustments Using the Dodge and Burn Tools

Some images might need tonal corrections only in specific (or local) areas. The Dodge and Burn tools are used for this purpose. As shown in Figure 5-22, the Dodge tool is being used to lighten the opening in the brick wall, revealing some detail.

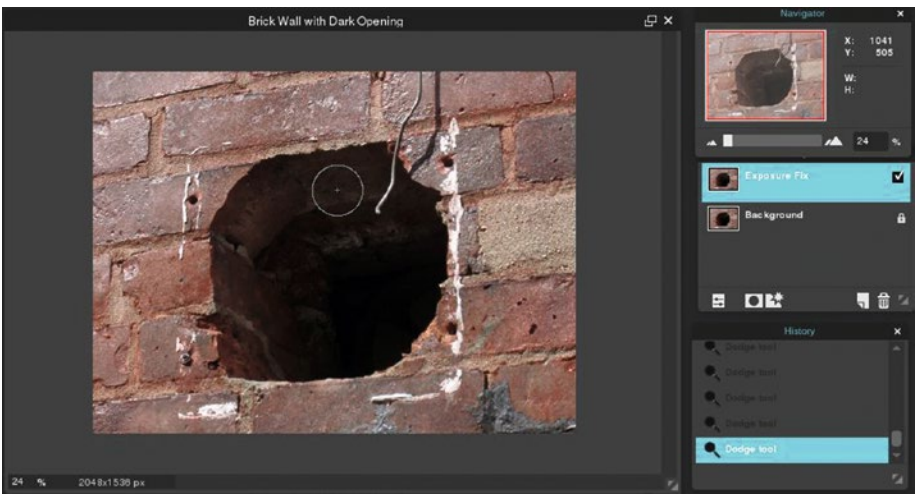

Figure 5-22. *Using the Dodge tool to lighten the opening*

■ **Note** In addition to the upcoming tutorial, you can also refer to the *Tools Tryout Guide and Practice Images* folder, which can be obtained from the Source Code/Downloads tab from this Apress page: http://www.apress.com/9781484226971.

TUTORIAL 9: USING THE BURN TOOL

Darkening Parts of an Image

In this tutorial, the Burn tool will be used to darken part of a hazy image.

1. Open the image titled `Ch05_Castle.jpg` found in the `Ch05 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Rename the duplicate layer `Exposure Fix` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Click the Burn tool icon and select a brush 200 pixels in diameter with a hardness of 50%.
5. Select the Midtones option and set the exposure to 50%
6. Work along the top of the hazy part of the castle (Figure 5-23).

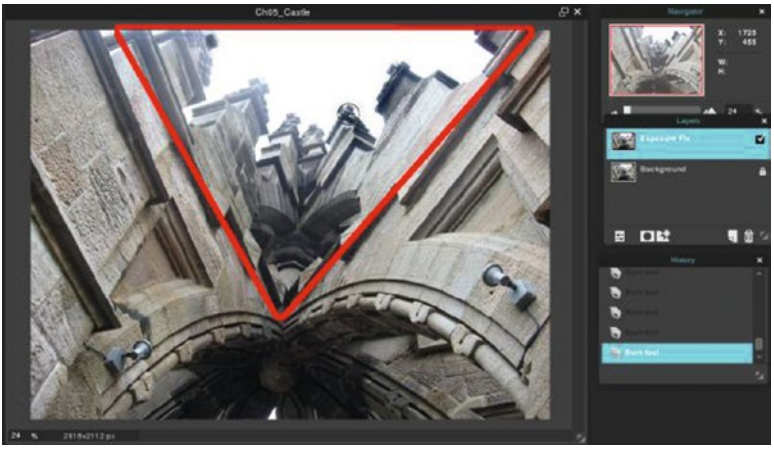

Figure 5-23. *The Burn tool will darken the hazy portion of this image*

7. Make short strokes, so if you need to undo any mistakes, it won't reverse too much of your work.

Using the Burn tool in the hazy area now makes the image look more evened out (Figure 5-24). When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 5-24. *Before and after comparison*

Summary

This chapter covered several methods for correcting tonal problems. The Brightness & Contrast adjustment dialog box is a basic tool that works well in many cases, but has limits. The Exposure adjustment dialog box is a quick method for improving underexposed images.

The Levels and Curves adjustment dialog boxes (while being more complex) offer more control in the tonal adjustments being made.

The Multiply and Screen layer modes can be used to improve images that are overexposed or underexposed, respectively.

The Dodge and Burn tools are used to make local tonal adjustments.

The next chapter covers a variety of color correction methods.

CHAPTER 6

Color Adjustments

This chapter looks at several methods of adjusting and correcting color, and several Curves presets for creative effects.

- *The RGB Color Model and Color Channels*: This part briefly looks at the RGB color model (which Pixlr Editor uses) and color channels.
- *Using the Color Balance Adjustment Dialog Box*: In this part, we'll look at correcting a color imbalance using this dialog box.
- *Using the Levels Adjustment Dialog Box*: In this part, we'll look at restoring faded colors by using Levels on each color channel.
- *Using the Curves Adjustment*: In this part, we'll look at making a color correction using Curves.
- *Using the Curves Presets*: This part looks at the Curves presets, used for making quick tonal changes, and color adjustments for artistic effect.

The RGB Color Model and Color Channels

Before moving on to the tutorial (in which some of the adjustments will be a bit more involved), let's learn a little bit about the *RGB color model* and *color channels.* Pixlr Editor uses the RGB color model, which mixes red, green, and blue light in various amounts to create a broad array of colors that are displayed on your monitor. When red, green, and blue light is combined at 100%, the result is white (Figure 6-1). Conversely, when there is zero percentage of each, black is the result.

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P. Whitt, *Beginning Pixlr Editor*, DOI 10.1007/978-1-4842-2698-8_6

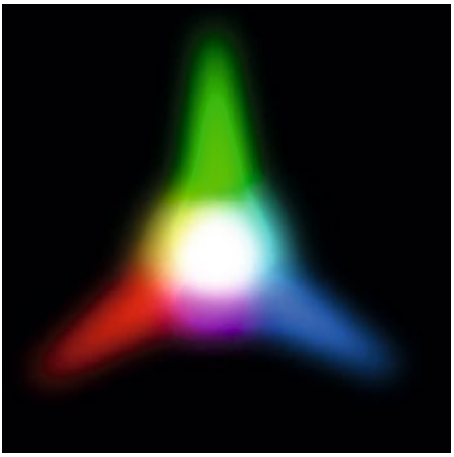

Figure 6-1. *Red, green, and blue light combined at 100% results in white*

An image displayed on your monitor in the RGB color model is comprised of three channels; one red, one green, and one blue. Put in its simplest terms, channels are essentially storage containers for the lightness value information of each color (Figure 6-2). The examples shown have been converted to grayscale for easier viewing.

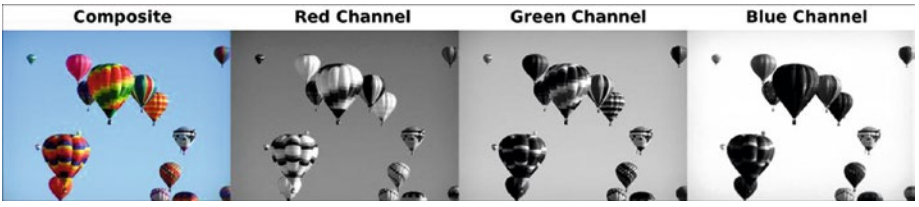

Figure 6-2. *Color channels store lightness value information of each color*

It's making adjustments in one or more color channels that alters the image's look. This is usually done indirectly by using the various adjustment functions Pixlr Editor has to offer. However, the Levels and Curves adjustments provide more direct control over each channel (we'll see an example of using Levels for this purpose in Tutorial 11 coming up a little later).

Using the Color Balance Adjustment Dialog Box

An image with a *color cast* (excessive tint of an undesired color) can often be easily corrected with this adjustment. It works by increasing more of the (unwanted) color's opposite, thus balancing it out. Figure 6-3 shows the Color Balance dialog box, and the corresponding colors and their opposites, which is controlled by using the sliders.

Figure 6-3. *The Color Balance dialog box corrects a color cast by increasing more of the unwanted color's opposite*

TUTORIAL 10: COLOR CORRECTION USING COLOR BALANCE

Removing a Color Cast

In this tutorial, we'll use the Color Balance dialog box to correct an image with a blue color cast that resulted from poor processing by the film lab.

1. Open the image titled `Ch06_Mr.Cash.jpg` found in the `Ch06 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Rename the duplicate layer `Color Fix` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Open the Color Balance dialog box (Adjustment ➤ Color Balance).
5. Move the Blue offset slider to the left until the numerical reading is -30 (Figure 6-4). This increases the yellow, offsetting the excess blue tint.

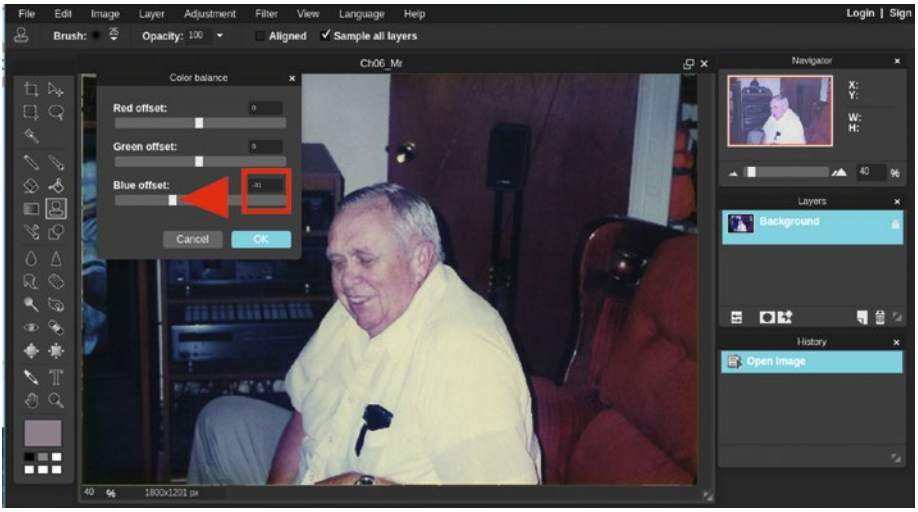

Figure 6-4. *Moving the Blue offset slider to the left increases the yellow*

Now, the blue tint is removed and the colors are more balanced (Figure 6-5). When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 6-5. *Before and after comparison*

Using the Levels Adjustment Dialog box

A common problem that affects older color photographs is the reduction of vibrance due to the dyes fading and shifting over time. Provided the dyes haven't faded too much, the Levels dialog box can be very useful for correcting this problem.

TUTORIAL 11: COLOR RESTORATION USING LEVELS

Restoring Faded Colors Image Using Levels on Each Color Channel

This tutorial involves adjustments made to each color channel to achieve the final result.

1. Open the image titled `Ch06_Girl Gone Fishing.jpg` found in the `Ch06 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Rename the duplicate layer `Color Fix` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Open the Levels dialog box (Adjustment ➤ Levels).
5. Click the triangle to the right of the Channel option dialog box. Scroll down to highlight the red channel (Figure 6-6). *Do not click OK just yet.*

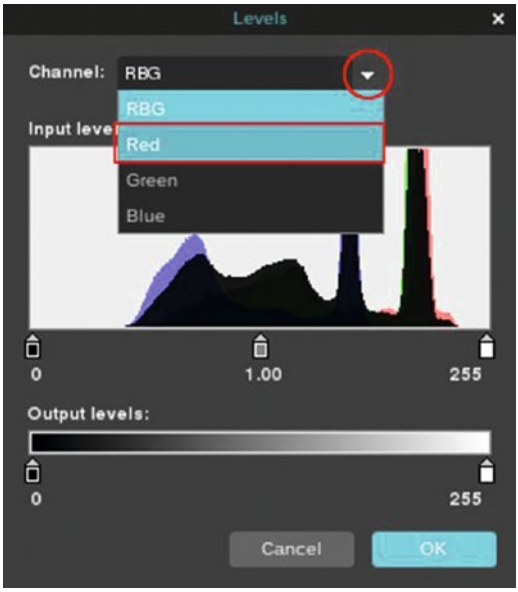

Figure 6-6. *Highlight the Red channel option*

6. Move the black point slider toward the center, stopping where the histogram data begins. Repeat this step with the white point slider (Figure 6-7). *Do not click OK just yet.*

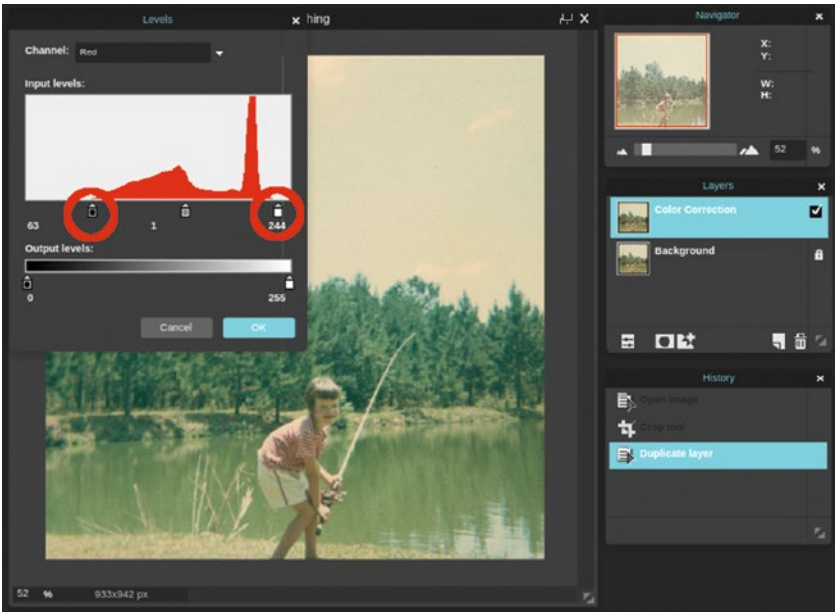

Figure 6-7. *Adjusting the black and white point sliders in the red channel*

7. Click the triangle again to open the Channel option dialog box—scroll down to highlight the green channel (Figure 6-8). *Do not click OK just yet.*

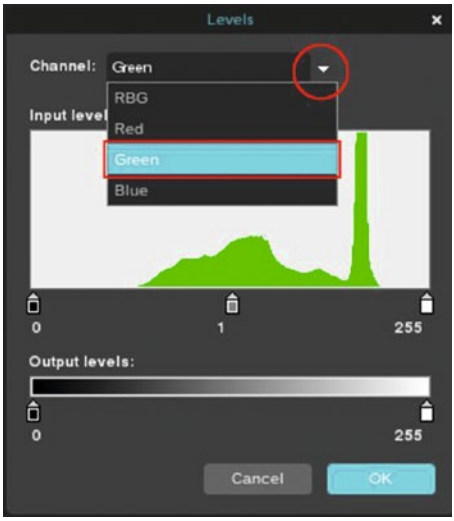

Figure 6-8. *Highlighting the Green channel*

8. Move the black point slider toward the center, stopping where the histogram data begins. Repeat this step with the white point slider (Figure 6-9). *Do not click OK just yet.*

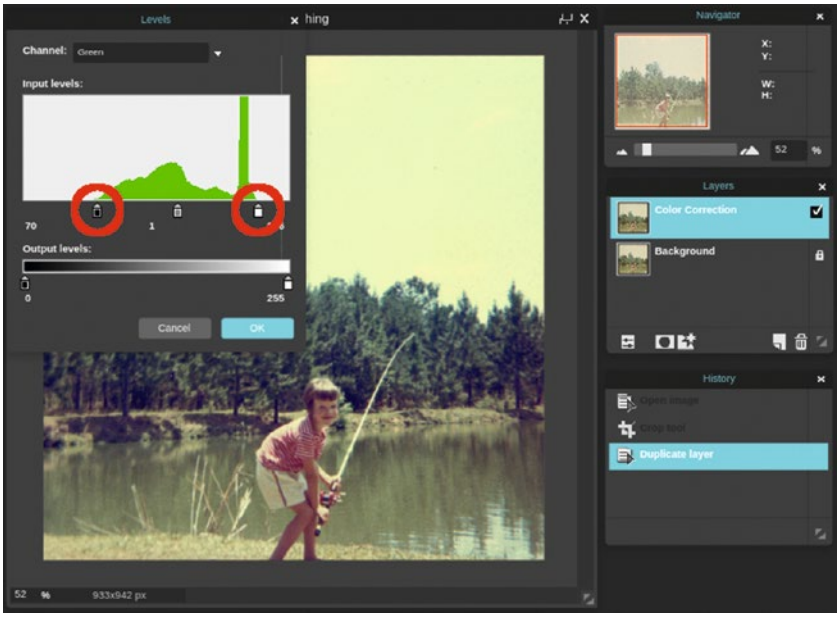

Figure 6-9. *Adjusting the black and white point sliders in the green channel*

9. Click the triangle again to open the Channel option dialog box—scroll down to highlight the blue channel (Figure 6-10). *Do not click OK just yet.*

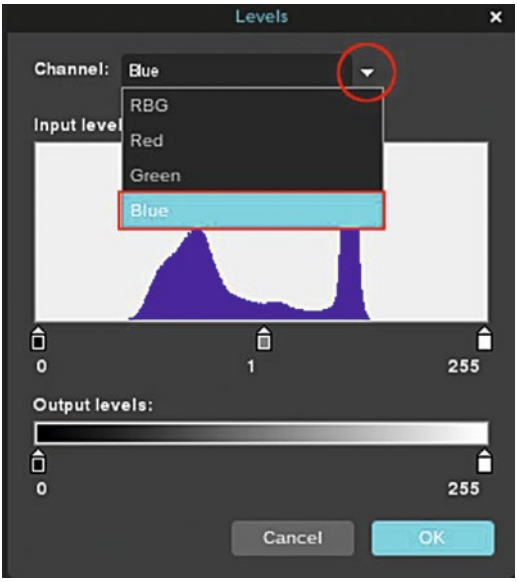

Figure 6-10. *Highlighting the Blue channel*

10. Move the black point slider toward the center, stopping where the histogram data begins. Repeat this step with the white point slider (Figure 6-11). *Click the OK button when you're done.*

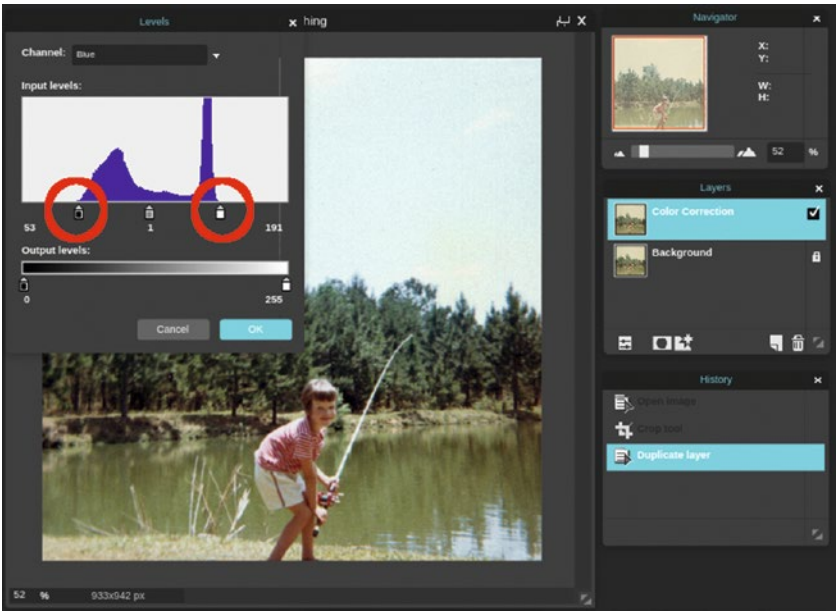

Figure 6-11. *Adjusting the black and white point sliders in the blue channel*

Now that the tonality of each color channel has been adjusted, the colors of the image are more vibrant, and the contrast is improved (Figure 6-12). When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 6-12. *Before and after comparison*

Using the Curves Adjustment Dialog Box

In the previous chapter, the Curves dialog box was used for making tonal corrections. In the upcoming tutorial, it will be used to make a tonal and color correction.

TUTORIAL 12: SETTING THE GRAY POINT USING CURVES

Removing a Color Cast Using Curves—Finishing with the Sponge Tool and Unsharp Mask

In this tutorial, the image has a predominate magenta color cast, with a bit of excess blue in the penguins. We'll correct this by setting the gray point using the middle eyedropper option in the Curves dialog box.

Then, we'll apply the finishing touches using the Sponge tool and Unsharp mask.

1. Open the image titled `Ch06_Penguins.jpg` found in the `Ch06 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Rename the duplicate layer `Color Fix` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Open the Curves dialog box (Adjustment ➤ Curves). Check the Histogram option box.
5. Click the middle (gray point) eyedropper icon.
6. Click in the target area indicated a few times (Figure 6-13). The goal is to achieve a result close to the one shown in the middle panel, so this may take repeated attempts. *Rather than close the Curves dialog box (only to relaunch it), reset it to Default in the Presets options to start over.* Click OK when you're done.

Figure 6-13. *Set the gray point by using the middle eyedropper option and sampling the area indicated in the left panel*

■ **Note** Ideally, the green channel's adjustment curve should bow upward slightly (increasing green to offset the magenta), and the blue adjustment curve should bow downward slightly (increasing yellow to offset the blue). Your results may vary slightly, but if the image is close to the one shown, it should suffice.

---

7. The penguin on the right still has a tinge of blue. Click the Sponge tool icon or press the letter P on your keyboard.
8. From the Brush options dialog box, select the soft, 200 pixel diameter brush.
9. Select the Desaturate option and set the strength to 9-10.
10. Brush along the wing, as shown in Figure 6-14, to reduce the blue tinge.

Figure 6-14. *Use the Sponge tool to reduce the blue tinge*

11. Because the picture was taken through a glass window, the clarity may have been slightly diminished. Open the Unsharp Mask filter (Filter ➤ Unsharp Mask).

12. Set the Amount to 110 and the Radius to 3 (leave the Threshold on the default setting of 15). This will sharpen the image just slightly (Figure 6-15).

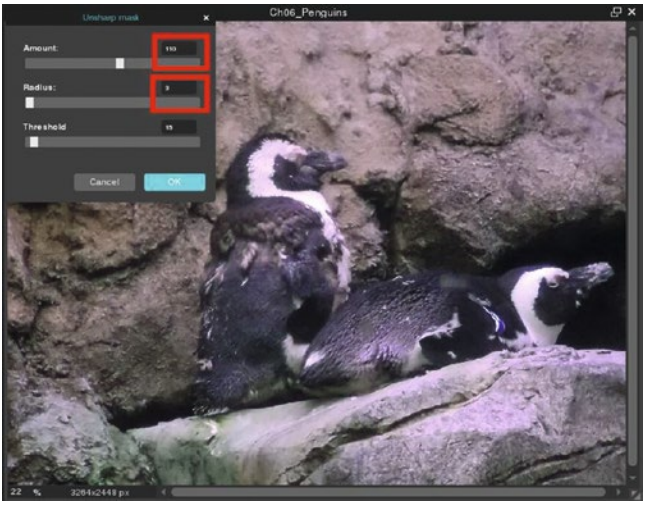

Figure 6-15. *The Unsharp Mask filter sharpens the image slightly*

13. Click OK when you're finished.

The image now looks more color-balanced and crisper (Figure 6-16).

Figure 6-16. *Before and after comparison*

When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

■ **Note** The eyedropper options in Curves are used to expand the tonal range in your image by setting the black, gray, or white points. It takes some experimentation, but in my experience setting the gray point works well most color correction situations.

The Curves Presets

There are a number of presets available to you in the Curves adjustment dialog box. Some make tonal changes, while others primarily affect color.

- *Default*—Used to apply manual changes (Figure 6-17).

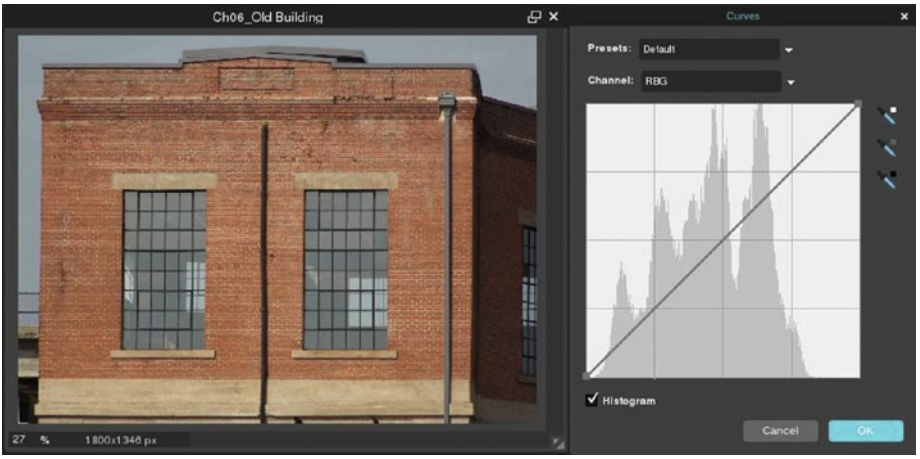

Figure 6-17. *The Default preset*

- *Invert*—Reverses the colors and lightness values (Figure 6-18).

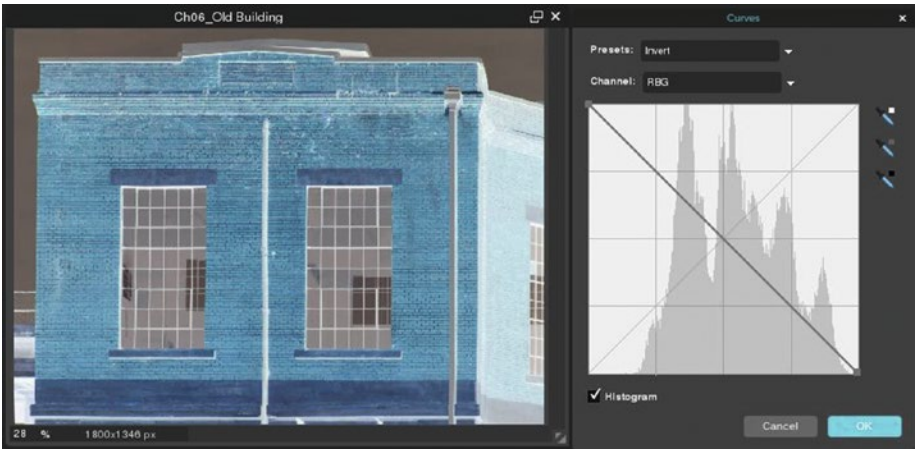

Figure 6-18. *The Invert preset*

- *Colder*—Slightly increases blue and green, giving the image a cool tone (Figure 6-19).

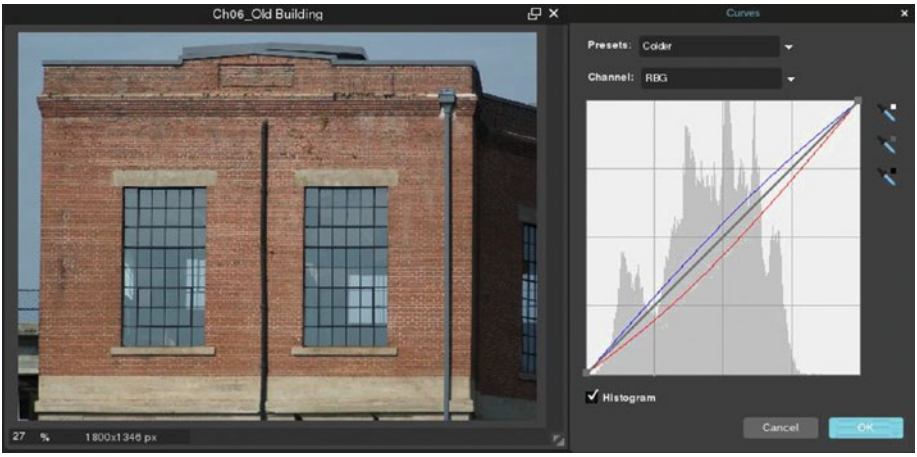

Figure 6-19. *The Colder preset*

- *Warmer*—Slightly increases red and yellow, giving the image a warm tone (Figure 6-20).

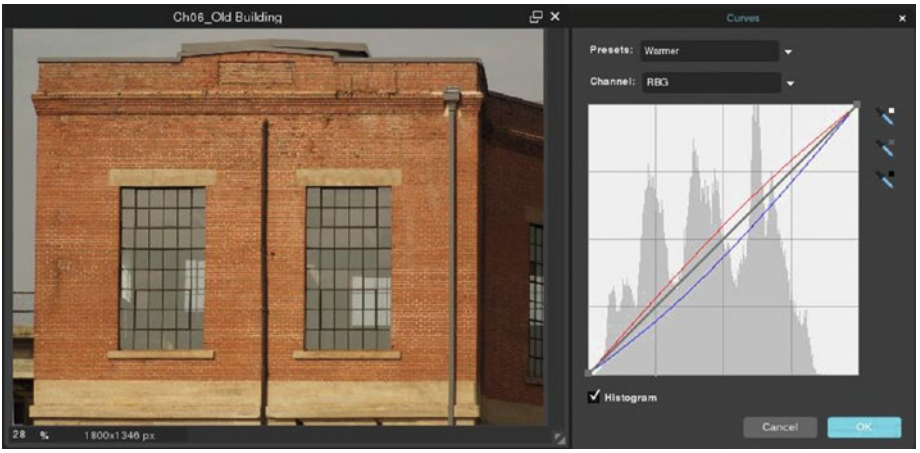

Figure 6-20. *The Warmer preset*

- *Increase Contrast*—Automatically creates an S curve, boosting the contrast (Figure 6-21).

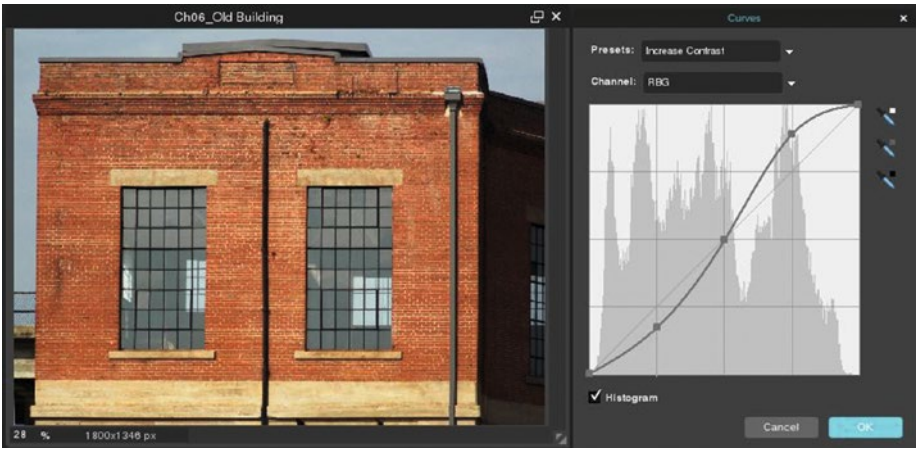

Figure 6-21. *The Increase Contrast preset*

- *Decrease Contrast*—Automatically creates a "reverse S curve," creating a flatter tone (Figure 6-22).

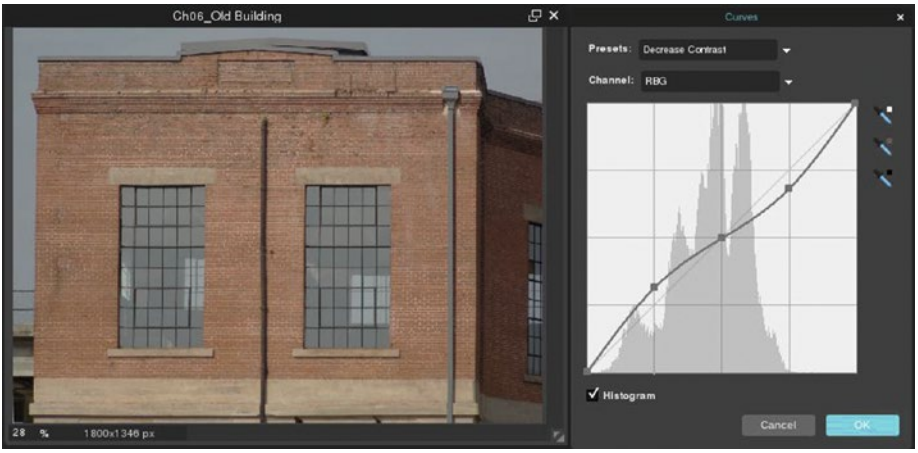

Figure 6-22. *The Decrease Contrast preset*

- *Darken Shadows*—Automatically darkens the dark to black range of pixels (Figure 6-23).

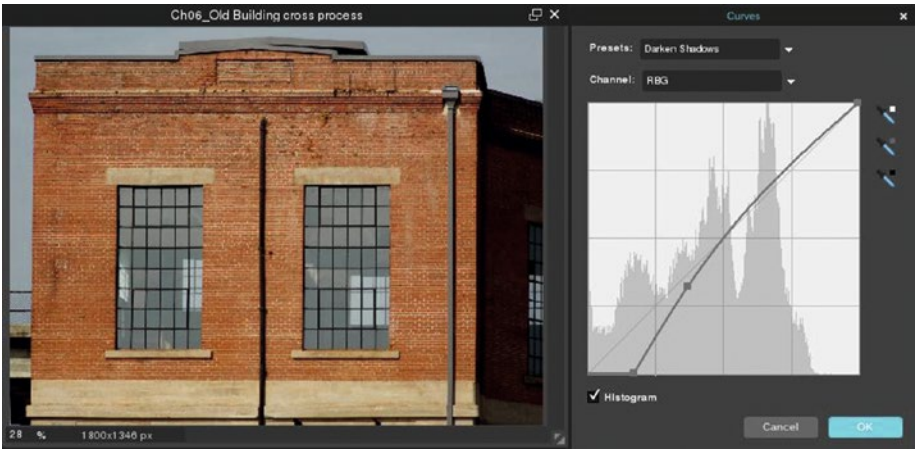

Figure 6-23. *The Darken Shadows preset*

- *Chillauto*—Increases blue and slightly increases green and cyan for a cool tone (Figure 6-24).

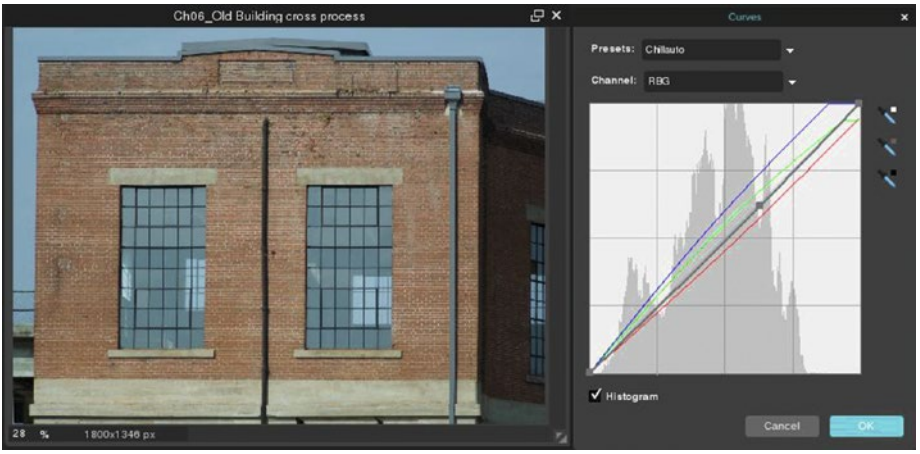

Figure 6-24. *The Chillauto preset*

- *Cross Process*—Mentioned in the Adjustments section of Chapter 3, this mimics the technique of purposely processing one film type using a photographic chemical intended for another film type (Figure 6-25).

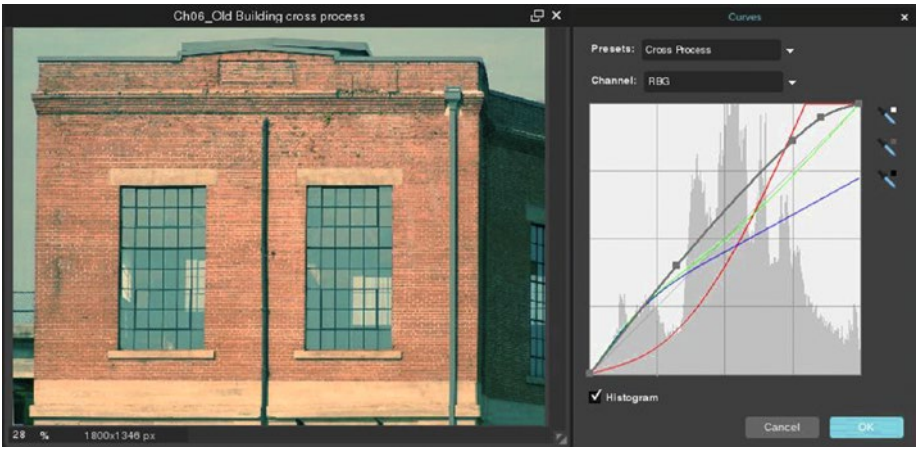

Figure 6-25. *The Cross Process preset*

- These are just the first nine presets—if you scroll further down you'll discover many more (Figure 6-26).

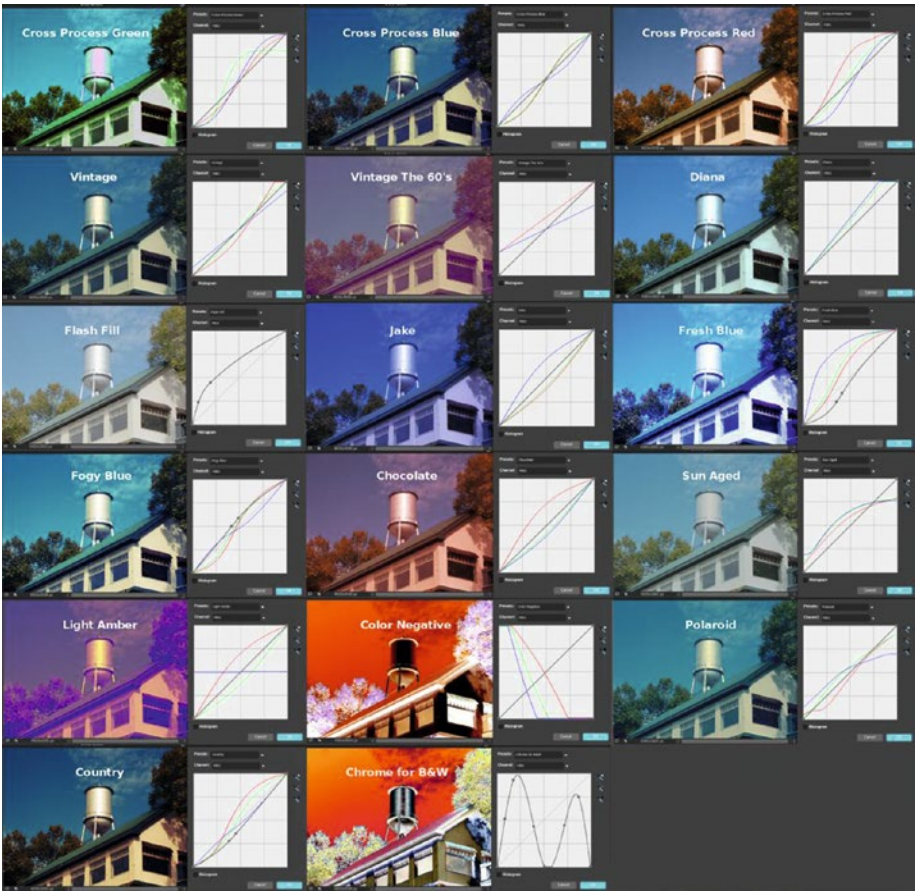

Figure 6-26. *The remaining Curves presets*

Summary

This chapter described several techniques for correcting and adjusting color. We first covered (very briefly) how RGB images are comprised of red, green, and blue light. Color channels are essentially storage containers for lightness value information for each color.

The Color Balance adjustment works by increasing the offending color's opposite to balance it out (such as a blue color cast being corrected by increasing yellow).

The Levels dialog was used to adjust each color channel to restore the vibrance to a faded color image.

The Curves dialog was used to set the gray point of an image with a magenta color cast. The Sponge tool was used to reduce the blue tinge in a local area, and the Unsharp Mask filter was used to sharpen the image slightly.

Lastly, we looked at the various tonal and color adjustments available from the Curves presets.

The next chapter looks at retouching and repairing photos using Pixlr Editor.

CHAPTER 7

Photo Retouching and Repair

Pictures quite often have flaws that digital correction can drastically improve. In some cases, the culprit are imperfections such as red eye or skin blemishes. Other times, the photo may have incurred physical damage over time. This chapter looks at techniques for retouching and repairing flawed and damaged images. Here's what we'll cover:

- *Red Eye Correction*: This part looks at the Red Eye Reduction tool and how it works its magic
- *Touching Up Blemishes Using the Spot Heal Tool*: In this part, we'll see how effective this tool is for clearing up facial blemishes.
- *Repairing Damage Using the Spot Heal and Clone Stamp Tools*: In this part, we'll tackle repairing an image that has sustained a collection of scratches, punctures, and creases over time.
- *Reducing Digital Noise*: In this part, you'll see how images with excessive noise can be improved.

Red Eye Correction

Everyone has seen them—those demon-like red eyes that become that can spoil an otherwise good picture. Red eye is caused by the camera's flash reflected off the retina of the eye when the picture is taken in ambient light (the pupils are open wide, allowing a large amount of light to enter). The red color is the result of blood-rich choroid, which is connective tissue that lies behind the retina.

Fortunately, the Red Eye Reduction tool can quickly come to the rescue. In most cases, it works fine by itself. However, it only does what the name implies—reduces the effect without completely fixing it. Sometimes, the red eye effect is severe enough to require several extra steps and tools to end up with more natural results, as you'll see shortly.

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TUTORIAL 13: RED EYE CORRECTION

Correcting Severe Red Eye Using Multiple Tools

In this tutorial, we'll correct an image of a little boy with severe red eye.

1. Open the image titled `Ch07_Red Eye.jpg` found in the `Ch07 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Click the Red Eye Reduction tool icon.
4. Click in the center of each eye in the duplicate layer. I used the default tolerance setting of 50%, but you can increase this slightly if needed (Figure 7-1).

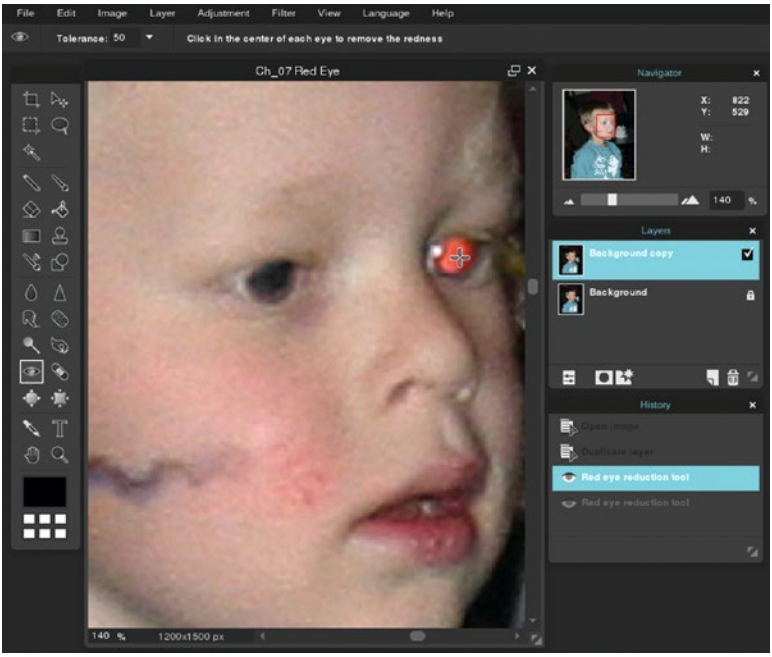

Figure 7-1. *Using the Red Eye Reduction tool to remove the red*

■ **Note** After applying the tool, the eyes look much better (and we could stop here and call it finished), but there are several steps we can take to make them look more natural—let's continue.

---

5. We'll need to make a couple of local tonal adjustments in the child's left eye. Click the Burn tool icon or press the letter N on your keyboard.
6. Select the soft, 25-pixel diameter brush from the presets and leave the Range and Exposure at their default settings.
7. Brush the lighter part of the left eye until it matches the darker outer portion (Figure 7-2).

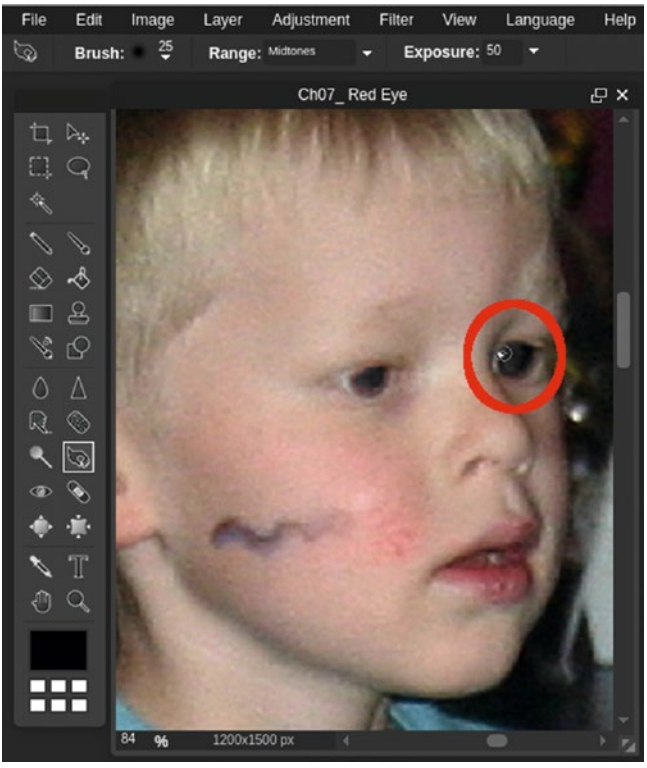

Figure 7-2. *Using the Burn tool to darken the pupil area of the left eye*

8. Now we need to lighten the iris portion of the eyes (the outer area surrounding the pupils). Click the Dodge tool icon or press the letter O on your keyboard.
9. Select the soft, 15-pixel diameter brush from the presets and change the Range to Shadows and Exposure to 20.
10. Brush around the pupils to lighten the iris, as shown in Figure 7-3.

Figure 7-3. *Using the Dodge tool to lighten the area around the pupils*

11. Create a new layer (Layer ➤ New Layer). Click the Toggle Layer Settings icon and change the Mode to Overlay.

12. Rename the layer `Eye Color` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.

13. Click in the Set Main Color swatch to open the Color Selector dialog box. Select a light blue using the numeric inputs: R-0, G-191, and B-255 (Figure 7-4). Click OK when you're done.

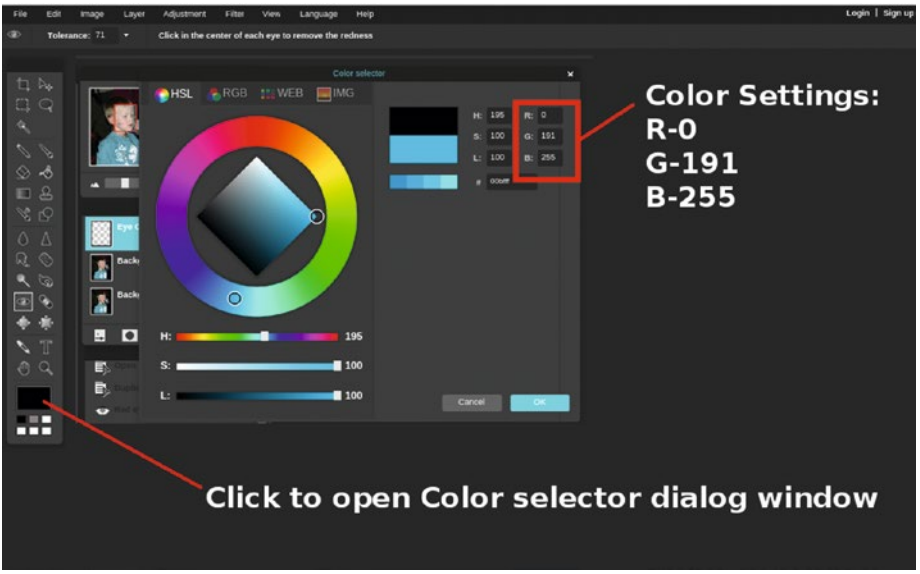

Figure 7-4. *Launch the Color Selector dialog box and use the numeric settings shown to achieve a light blue*

14. Click the Brush tool (or press B on your keyboard).
15. Select the soft, 20-pixel diameter brush from the presets.
16. Brush around the pupils to apply the eye color. Lower the layer's opacity to about 15% (Figure 7-5).

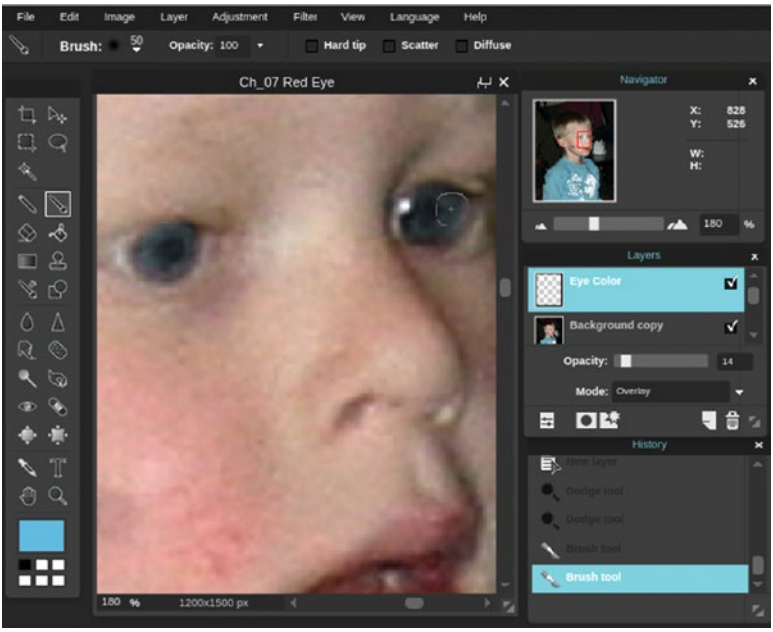

Figure 7-5. *Applying the eye color with the Brush tool*

The final result should be close to that shown in Figure 7-6. As mentioned, in many cases the Red Eye Reduction tool will suffice without extra measures, but when it doesn't, you'll now know how to handle those extreme cases of the red eye effect.

Figure 7-6. *Before and after comparison*

When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference.

If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).

Touching Up Blemishes

Touching up images with facial blemishes is a very common service provided by professional photographers and retouch artists. Pixlr Editor has a powerful weapon to use against blemishes (at least in photographic images), and that is the Spot Heal tool, as you'll see in the lesson that follows.

TUTORIAL 14: BLEMISH TOUCH UP

Removing Blemishes Using the Spot Heal Tool

In this tutorial, we'll remove quickly remove the largest, most obvious blemishes using the Spot Heal tool.

1. Open the image titled `Ch07_Great Grandpa.jpg` found in the `Ch07 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).

3. Rename the duplicate layer `Heal Layer` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Click the Spot Heal tool icon, set the brush diameter to about 20 pixels, and make sure the Blend Nearby option is checked.
5. Zoom in close enough to view comfortably. Starting at the top of the head, click over the larger blemishes (Figure 7-7). They should disappear seamlessly, but if not undo the step and try again.

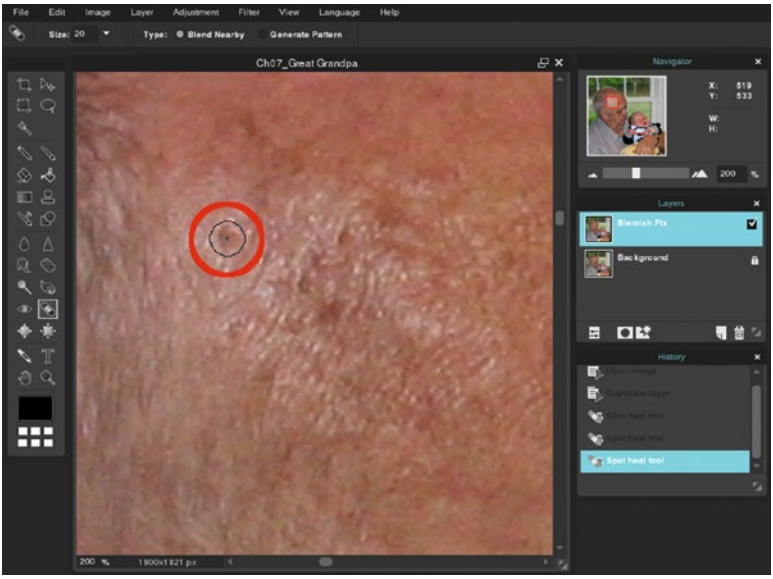

Figure 7-7. *Use the Spot Heal tool starting at the top of the head*

■ **Note** The brush size should be only slightly larger than the blemish, so adjust as needed.

---

6. Work down along the side of the face, as shown in Figure 7-8.

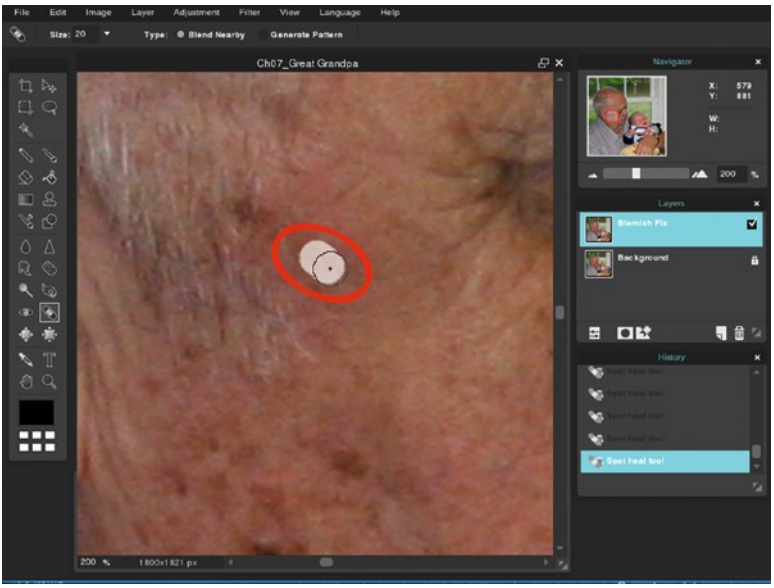

Figure 7-8. *Work downward along the face*

7. As you're working, zoom out occasionally to monitor your progress (Figure 7-9). Toggle the duplicate layer's visibility off and on to compare the original to the work in progress.

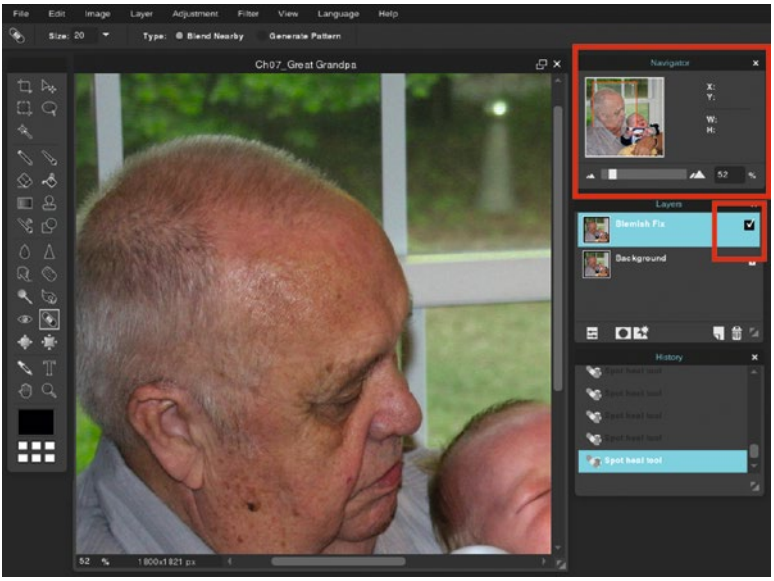

Figure 7-9. *Zoom out occasionally and toggle the layer's visibility to monitor your progress as you work*

The end result should resemble that shown in Figure 7-10. As you can see, the Spot Heal tool is extremely useful. When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

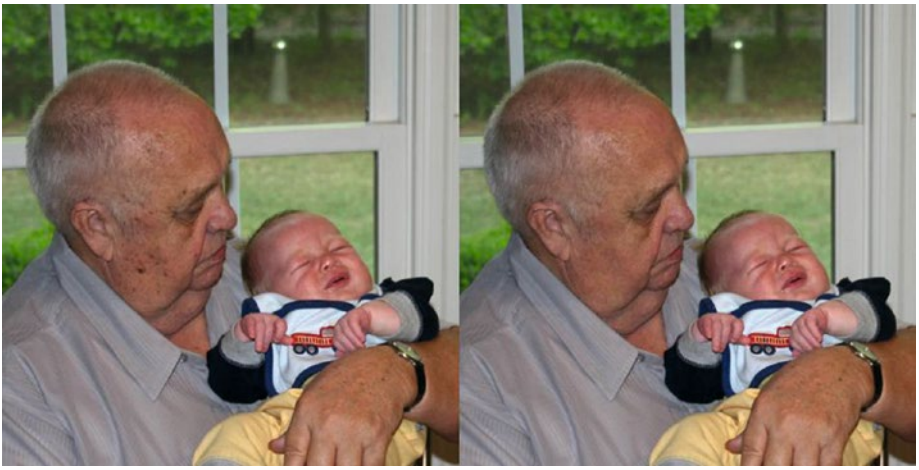

Figure 7-10. *Before and after comparison*

Removing Scratches and Damage

Repairing damage is another popular service provided by retouch artists. In the forthcoming lesson, we'll repair a photo that has incurred some damage over time because of poor storage practices. We'll be using both the Spot Heal and Clone Stamp tools for this assignment.

TUTORIAL 15: REMOVING SCRATCHES AND DAMAGE

Repairing a Photo Using the Spot Heal Tool and the Clone Stamp Tool

Although the Spot Heal tool is generally used for removing skin imperfections, it can be used for repairing scratches and other types of damage. The downside is that it doesn't always work (it largely depends on the image content). In instances when it doesn't work, the Clone Stamp tool can take over, as you'll soon see.

■ **Note** It's a good idea to review the Clone Stamp tool section of the supplemental *Tools Tryout Guide and Practice Images* folder, which can be obtained from the Source Code/Downloads tab from this Apress page: http://www.apress.com/9781484226971.

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1. Open the image titled `Ch07_Scratched Riverboat Ride.jpg` found in the `Ch07 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer) and rename it `Heal Layer` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
3. Create a new layer (Layer ➤ New Layer). Rename the layer `Clone Layer` using the layer's textbox. (It won't be used just yet, so click the duplicate background layer to make it active.)
4. Click the Spot Heal tool icon, set the brush diameter to about 30 pixels, and make sure the Blend Nearby option is checked.
5. Remove the three puncture marks on the Heal Layer layer (Figure 7-11) using the Spot Heal tool.

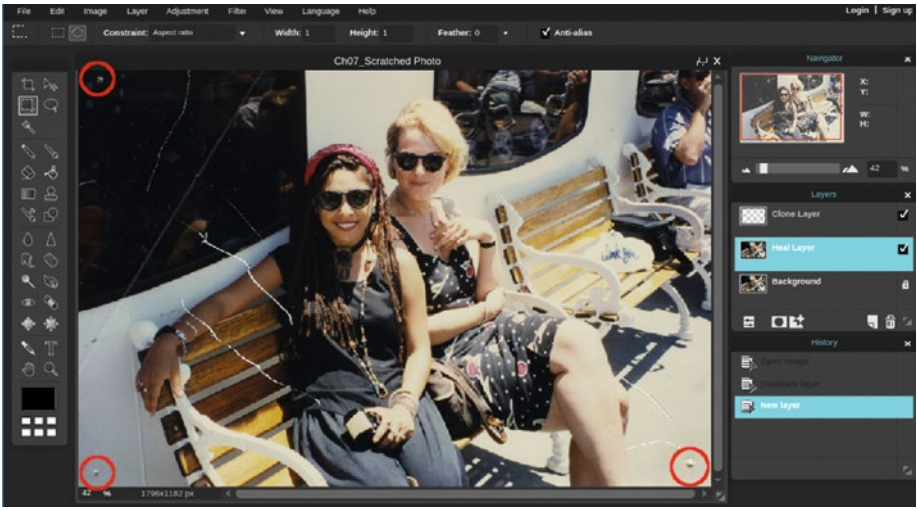

Figure 7-11. *Remove the puncture marks shown*

6. Use the Spot Heal tool on the scratches (indicated in yellow) shown in Figure 7-12 on the Heal Layer. The default brush diameter is 10 pixels—if necessary, increase the diameter slightly.

Figure 7-12. *Use the Spot Heal tool on the areas indicated in yellow*

7. Click the Clone Layer to activate it.
8. Click the Clone Stamp tool icon or press the letter S on your keyboard. Make sure the Sample All Layers option is checked.
9. Repair the areas indicated in blue using the Clone Stamp tool. Be sure to re-sample often (Control+Click) as you work to avoid repeating patterns.

■ **Note** Using the Spot Heal tool in one stroke over areas with distinctive tonal differences (such as where the shadow of the bench and the sunlit deck surface meet) usually ends up with smudged results. That's the purpose of using the Clone Stamp tool in those transitional areas.

---

10. Continue the process, working upward, as shown in Figure 7-13. Be sure to activate the corresponding layer when switching from one tool to another.

Figure 7-13. *Continue the process working upward*

11. Use the Clone Stamp tool on the remaining scratches, the tear, and the crease indicated in blue (Figure 7-14).

Figure 7-14. *Use the Clone Stamp tool on the remaining scratches, the tear, and the crease*

12. Choose the soft, 9-pixel diameter brush from the presets and finish by removing the remaining specks and dust (Figure 7-15).

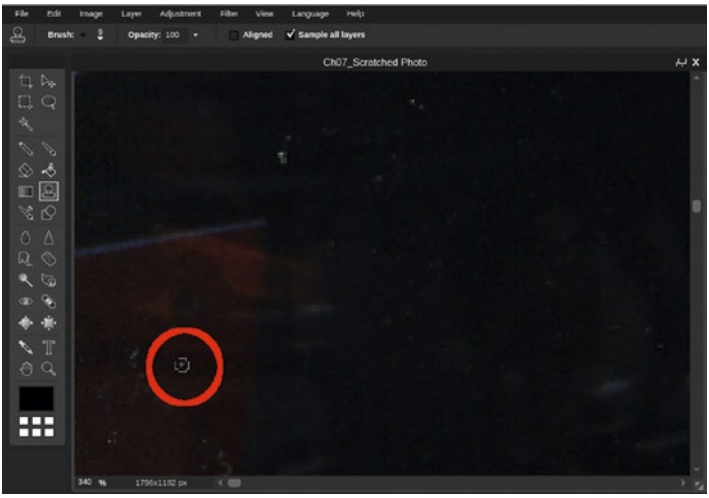

Figure 7-15. *Use the Clone Stamp tool to finish the remaining specks*

■ **Note** Be sure to zoom in and look all around the image using the Navigator to make sure everything is cleaned up.

When you're finished, the result is an image that looks almost new (Figure 7-16). This type of work is time consuming, but can work wonders when repairing damaged photos—the key to making undetectable repairs is practice. When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name in and a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 7-16. *Before and after comparison*

Reducing Image Noise

Image noise is an undesirable by-product that has a gritty appearance. It usually results from from taking pictures in low light situations. Pixlr Editor's Denoise Filter helps smooth the image's appearance. The Denoise Filter is a "one shot" filter—it does not offer a dialog box with additional options, but it can be applied repeatedly. However, its effectiveness will be limited on images with excessive noise.

TUTORIAL 16: REDUCING IMAGE NOISE

Using the Denoise Filter

1. Open the image titled `Ch07_Noisy Image.jpg` found in the `Ch07 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer) and rename it `Noise Reduction` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
3. Zoom in to see the noise more closely (Figure 7-17).

Figure 7-17. *A close-up view of image noise*

4. Apply the Denoise filter (choose Filter ➤ Denoise) twice.

This process won't magically turn a poor quality, noisy image into a beautiful photo, but it will improve it to some extent (Figure 7-18). When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 7-18. *Before and after comparison*

Summary

This chapter described several techniques for retouching and improving images with various imperfections.

The Red Eye Reduction tool is very useful for correcting the red eye effect caused by the camera flash. As you learned in the tutorial, in some cases extra steps are necessary to make the eyes look more natural.

In the tutorial featuring the elderly man holding his great-grandchild, the Spot Heal tool was used to remove the blemishes from his face.

Next, both the Spot Heal tool and the Clone Stamp tool were used to repair and clean up an image damaged by scratches, a tear, a crease, and dust specks.

The last thing we covered was using the Denoise filter to improve the appearance of an image with excessive digital noise.

The next chapter covers altering images by digitally removing unwanted elements and replacing backgrounds.

CHAPTER 8

Removing/Adding Elements and Background Replacement

In Chapter 4, we learned the importance of composing a good image before snapping the picture. When this rule is practiced, it can eliminate the need to make digital alterations that could have been avoided.

Of course, sometimes these situations can't always be avoided•when they can't, Pixlr Editor can be used to modify the image.

In this chapter, we'll learn the following:

- *Removing Unwanted Elements*: In this part, we'll learn how to improve an image by removing unnecessary objects.
- *Adding Elements*: In this part, we'll digitally add a second bird to the image being worked with throughout this chapter.
- *Background Replacement*: This part will demonstrate how to switch a so-so background to one with more appeal.

Removing Unwanted Elements

In this tutorial, we'll learn how to remove some distracting objects from an image.

TUTORIAL 17: REMOVING DISTRACTING ELEMENTS

Borrowing Image Data to Cover Unwanted Objects

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Open the image titled `Ch08_Macaw.jpg` found in the `Ch08 Practice Images` folder.

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2. Click the Lasso tool icon (or press L on your keyboard).
3. Set the Feather radius to 15 in the tool options bar. This will help the copied image data of the foliage to blend in better.
4. Make a selection around some of the foliage just above the feeder (Figure 8-1).

Figure 8-1. *Use the Lasso tool to make a selection around some of the foliage just above the feeder*

5. Copy (choose Edit ➤ Copy) and paste (Edit ➤ Paste) the selected area to a new layer.
6. Click the Move tool icon, then move the copied image data over the feeder (Figure 8-2).

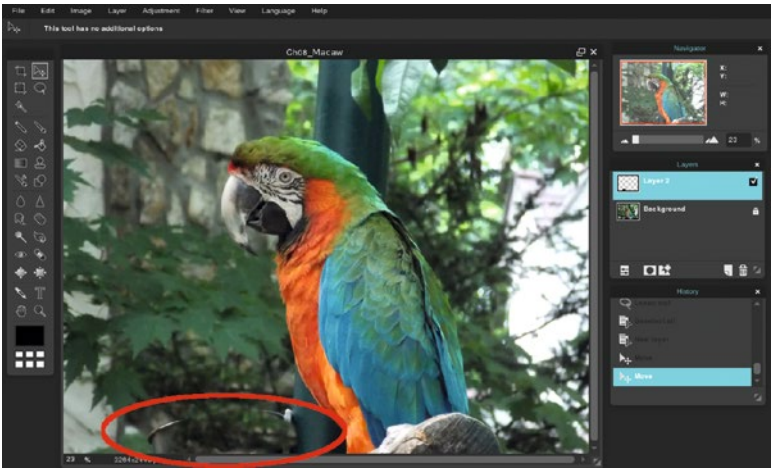

Figure 8-2. *Move the copied image data of the foliage over the feeder*

7. Rename the new layer `Foliage` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.

8. Click the Clone Stamp tool icon (or press S on your keyboard). Make sure the Sample All Layers option is checked.

9. Select the soft, round brush with a 150-pixel diameter from the presets.

10. Use the Clone Stamp tool to blend the foliage and cover up any obvious gaps, repeating patterns, etc. It should resemble the example shown in Figure 8-3. Make sure no excess image data is covering the bird's body—if it is, use the Eraser tool to remove it.

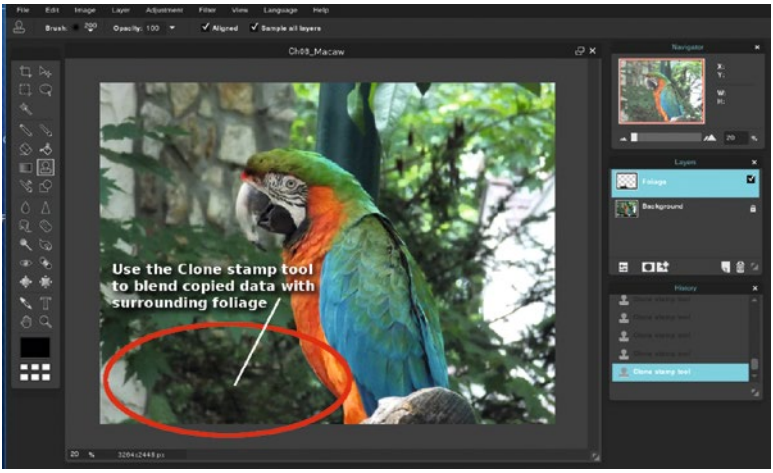

Figure 8-3. *Use the Clone Stamp tool to blend and cover up any gaps*

11. Click the background layer to make it active.
12. Click the Lasso tool icon (or press L on your keyboard) and use the same Feather radius setting as before.
13. Make a selection around some of the foliage just above the bird's back (Figure 8-4).

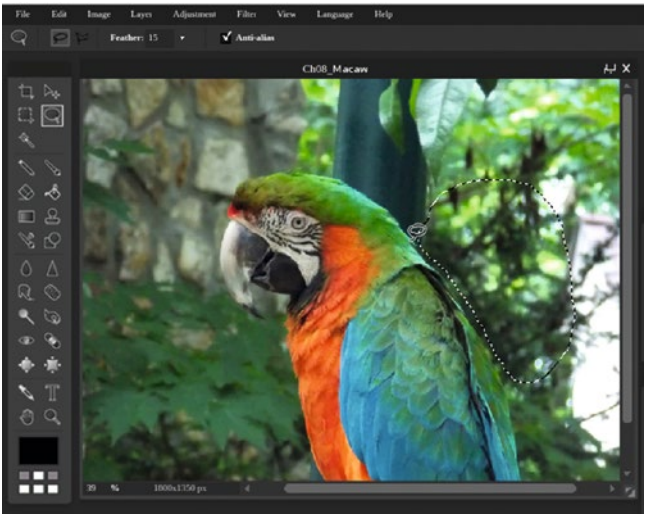

Figure 8-4. *Make a selection just above the bird as shown*

14. Copy (Edit ➤ Copy) and paste (Edit ➤ Paste) the selected area to a new layer.

15. Rename the new layer `Foliage 2` using the layer thumbnail's box.

16. Use the Move tool to position the layer above the head, then use the Free Transform command (Edit ➤ Free Transform) to rotate the layer slightly counter-clockwise (Figure 8-5).

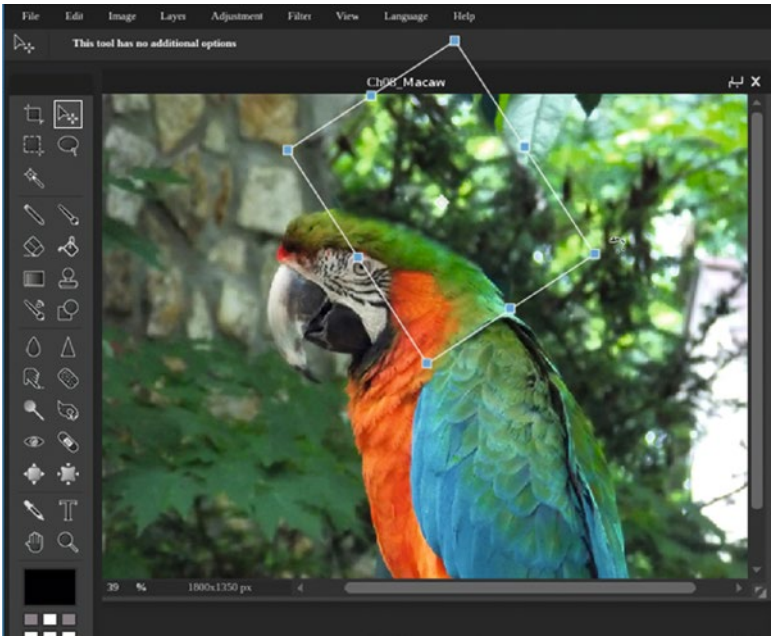

Figure 8-5. *Rotate the layer slightly counter-clockwise*

17. Click the Move tool icon, then move the copied image data over the post—some of it will need to slightly cover the bird to completely cover the post.

18. Click the Eraser tool icon (or press E on your keyboard) and remove the overlapping image data (Figure 8-6).

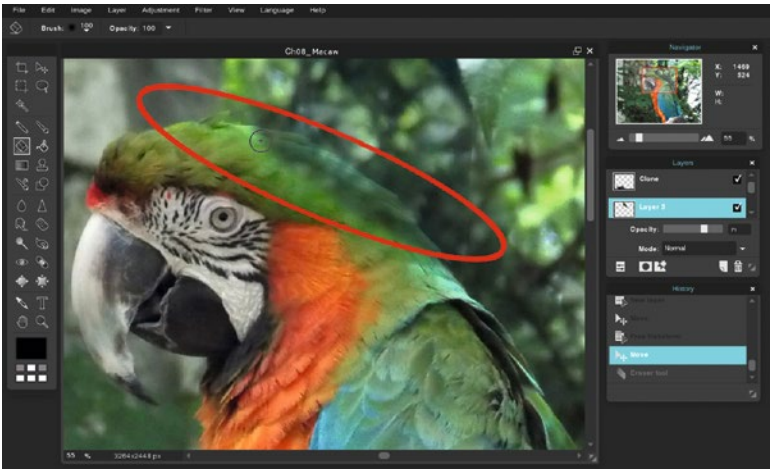

Figure 8-6. *Use the Eraser tool to remove the excess image data*

19. Use the Clone Stamp tool to blend the foliage image data in with its surroundings (Figure 8-7). Be sure to sample often from various areas to avoid repeating patterns.

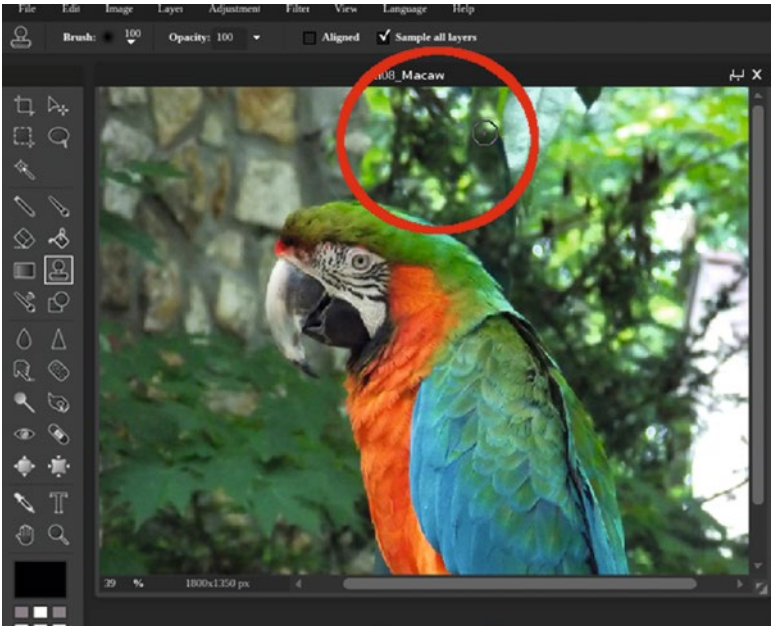

Figure 8-7. *Use the Clone Stamp tool to blend the foliage in with the surroundings*

Figure 8-8 shows the before and after comparison. When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 8-8. *Before and after comparison*

Adding Elements

I thought it might be nice to give our macaw friend a companion to keep him company. In this tutorial, we'll learn how to add a bird from another photo.

TUTORIAL 18: ADDING ELEMENTS

The Addition of a Second Bird from a Different Source Image

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Open the image titled `Ch08_Macaw (Edited).jpg` found in the `Ch08 Practice Images` folder (this version will resemble the result from the previous tutorial with the post and feeder removed).
2. Open the image titled `Ch08_Cockatoo.jpg` found in the `Ch08 Practice Images` folder as a layer (Layer ➤ Open Image as Layer).
3. The image of the cockatoo now exists as a layer over the background layer. Using the Toggle Layer Settings dialog box, lower the opacity of the imported layer to 50%—this will help make it easier to move into position.

4. Rename the layer `Cockatoo` using the layer thumbnail's textbox and move it into the position indicated in Figure 8-9 using the Move tool.

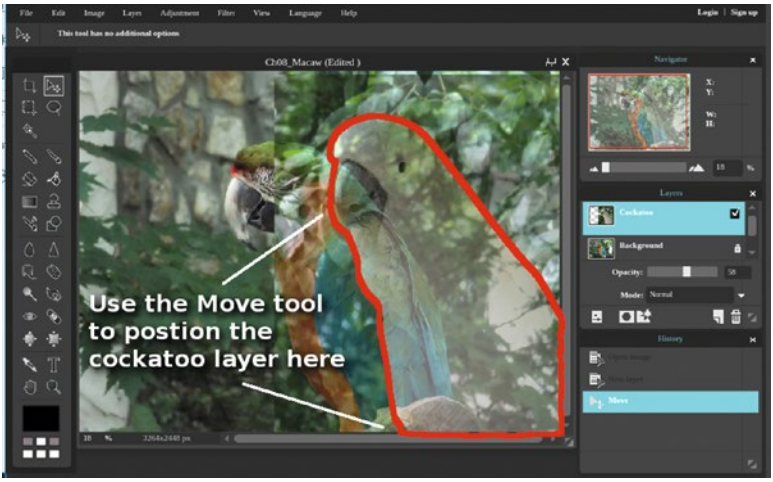

Figure 8-9. *Use the Move tool to position the Cockatoo layer as indicated here*

5. Restore the layer's opacity to 100% using the Toggle Layer Settings dialog box.
6. Add a layer mask using the Toggle Layer Settings dialog box (the Cockatoo layer will seem to disappear, but it's still there).

■ **Note** Layer masks are discussed in greater detail in *The Beginner's Guide to Layers* PDF, which can be obtained from the Source Code/Downloads tab from this Apress page: `http://www.apress.com/9781484226971`.

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7. Click the Brush tool icon (or press B on your keyboard). Select the hard, 200-pixel diameter brush from the presets.

8. Click the layer mask to make it active (indicated by a red border) and paint to reveal the cockatoo (Figure 8-10). Don't worry about the pixels outside of the bird being revealed—that will be dealt with shortly.

■ **Note** As you paint in the layer mask, each stroke is indicated by a green overlay. When the mouse button is released, the overlay disappears and the portion of the image the stroke covered is revealed.

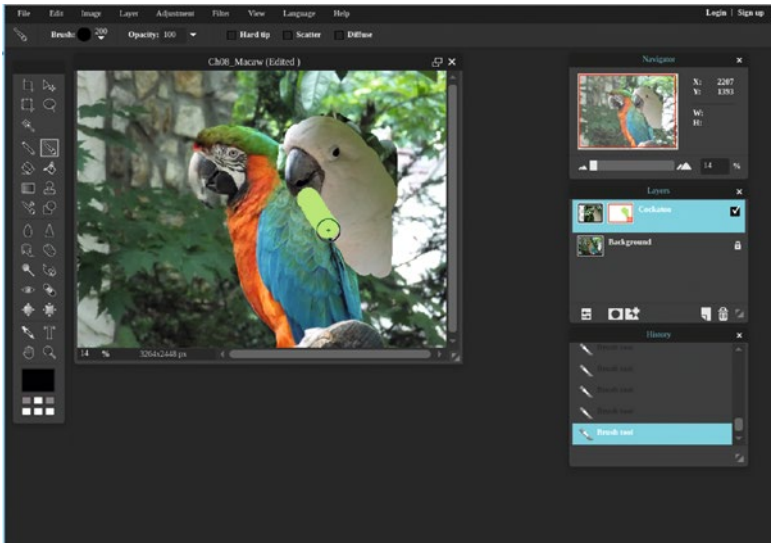

Figure 8-10. *Paint in the layer mask to reveal the cockatoo*

9. After the cockatoo is revealed, we need to hide the fringe (excess) image data around it. Click the Eraser tool icon (or press E on your keyboard).

10. Select a small brush 30-50 pixels in diameter. Set the hardness to 70%.

11. Zoom in using the Navigator and work along the edge carefully to restore the mask, hiding the excess image data around the cockatoo (Figure 8-11).

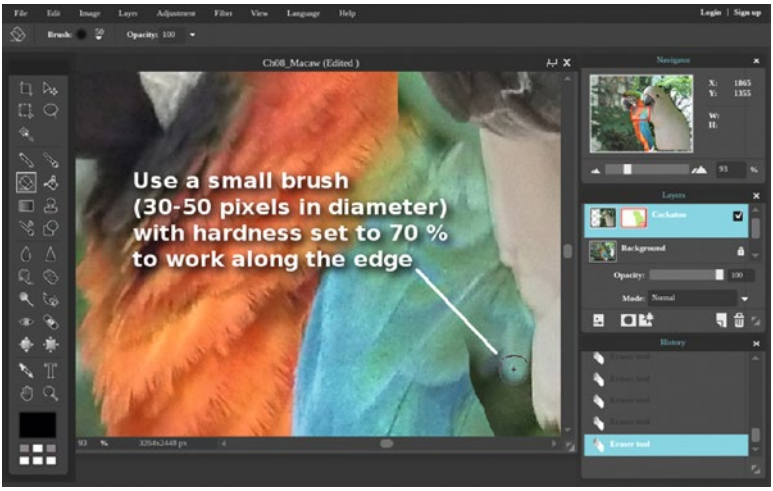

Figure 8-11. *Work along the edge carefully*

12. After working along the entire edge, switch to a larger brush to remove the larger areas.

13. Look over the entire layer closely to make sure there aren't any stray (or missing) pixels.

Figure 8-12 shows the before and after comparison. When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 8-12. *Before and after comparison*

Background Replacement

Sometimes, images can be improved by using a different background. In the upcoming tutorial, we'll replace a plain light background (which is actually a wall) and replace it with something more stylish.

In many cases, using a layer mask as we did in the previous tutorial will work fine. If the subject has a smooth outline, then it's usually fairly easy to paint the subject into a new background and use the Eraser tool to remove the excess image data.

However, putting images of people on a different background can sometimes be challenging. For example, not everyone has straight, smooth hair and isolating curly hair can be difficult.

Fortunately, the method used in the upcoming lesson can deal with that issue easily. It might not work in every scenario, but it works well in high-contrast images with light backgrounds.

TUTORIAL 19: BACKGROUND REPLACEMENT

Replacing a Wall with a Studio Background

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Open the image titled `Ch08_Studio Background.jpg` found in the `Ch08 Practice Images` folder.
2. Open the image titled `Ch08_Portrait of Young Woman.jpg` found in the `Ch08 Practice Images` folder as a layer (choose Layer ➤ Open Image as Layer).
3. Rename the layer `Portrait` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Change the layer's blending mode to Darken using the Toggle layer settings (Figure 8-13). The lightest areas will become transparent, leaving the darkest portions of the image intact.

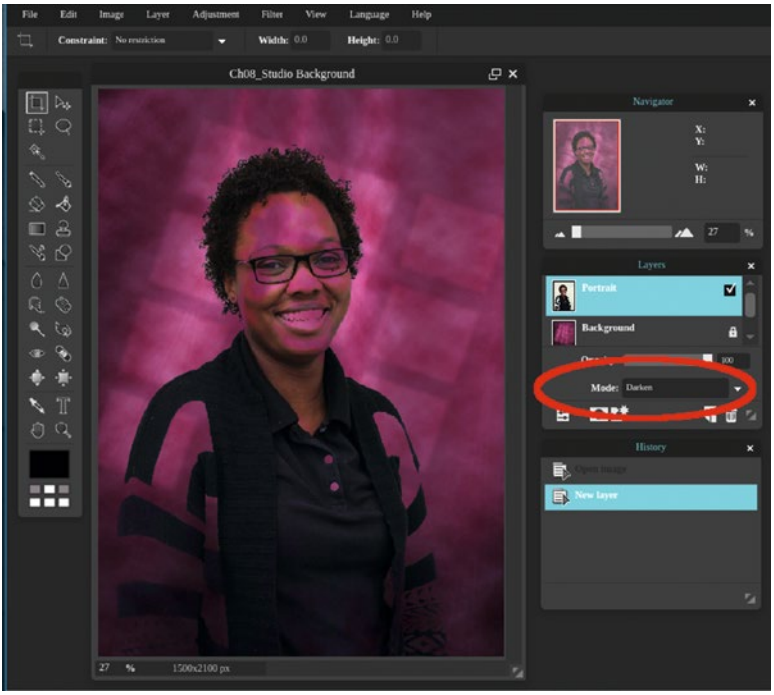

Figure 8-13. *Change the Blending mode to Darken to make the background transparent and keep the dark portions intact*

5. Duplicate the layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer) and change the blending mode to Normal.
6. Click the Lasso tool icon (or press L on your keyboard).
7. Make a selection of the background, getting close to the young woman (Figure 8-14).

Figure 8-14. *Use the Lasso tool to select most of the background*

8. Clear the pixels (Edit ➤ Clear). Press Control+D to deactivate the selection.

9. Click the Eraser tool icon (or press E on your keyboard). Select the soft, 150-pixel diameter brush from the presets.

10. Starting on the left side, erase the fringe area of the background along the hair, as shown in Figure 8-15. This reveals the pixels of the underlying layer that remained intact when the blending mode was changed to Darken in Step 4.

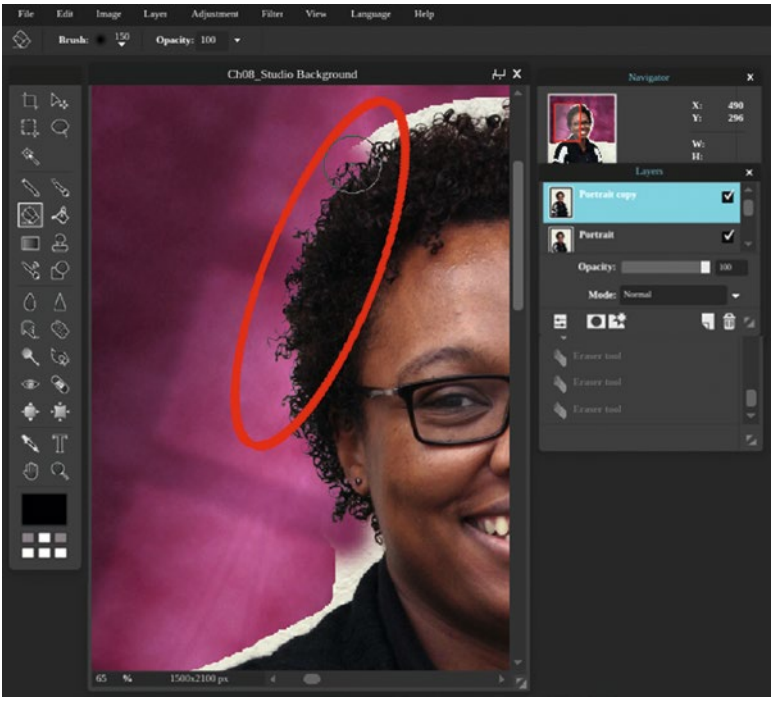

Figure 8-15. *Use the Eraser tool to remove the fringe area of the background, revealing the intact pixels of the underlying layer*

11. Reduce the brush size to 30 pixels and set the hardness to 75% in the Tool Options dialog box, then work along the edge of the face and sweater (Figure 8-16).

■ **Note** As you work along the image with the Eraser tool, precision isn't quite as important in the darker areas since the underlying pixels are intact. However, in the white areas of the sweater, be sure to use care along the edge.

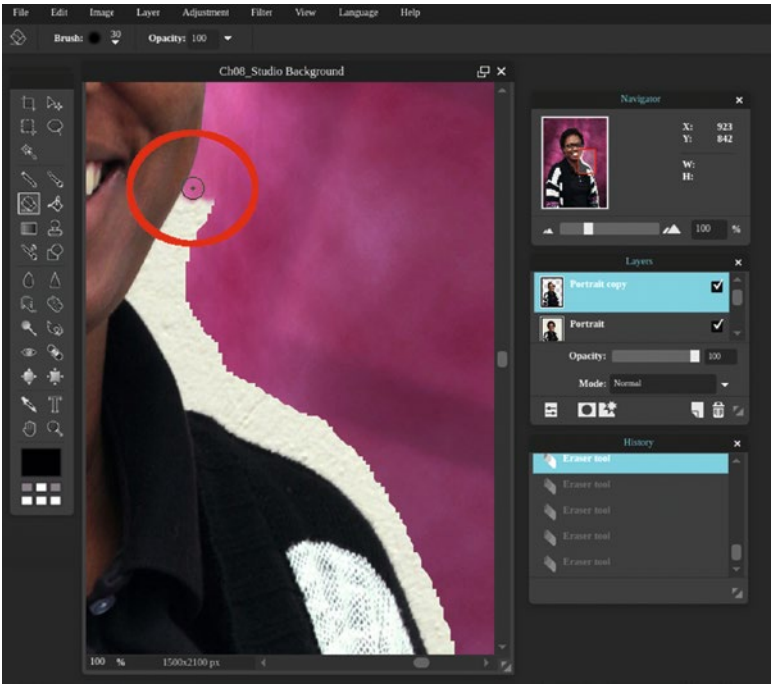

Figure 8-16. *Use a smaller brush to work along the face and sweater*

12. Finish removing the fringe along the sweater on both sides (Figure 8-17).

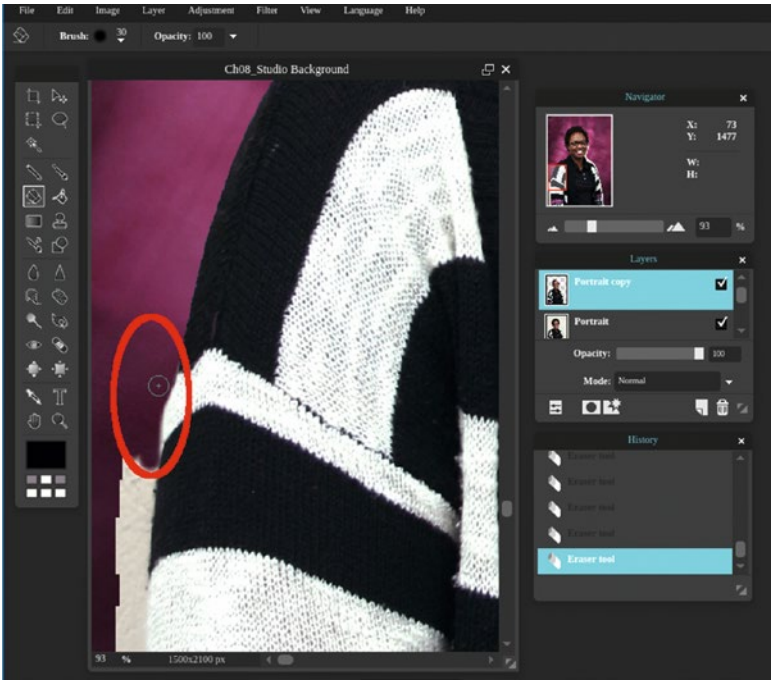

Figure 8-17. *Finish removing the fringe area on the sweater*

Figure 8-18 shows the before and after comparison. When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

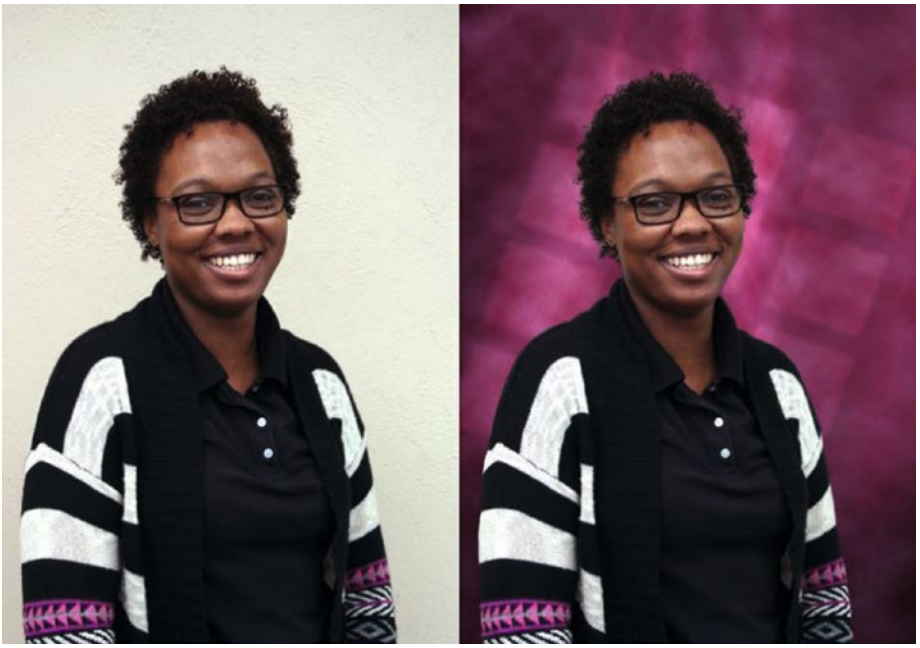

Figure 8-18. *Before and after comparison*

If you had been working with the opposite situation in this tutorial (which would be light hair against a dark background), the layer named Portrait would be set to the Lighten blend mode (Figure 8-19).

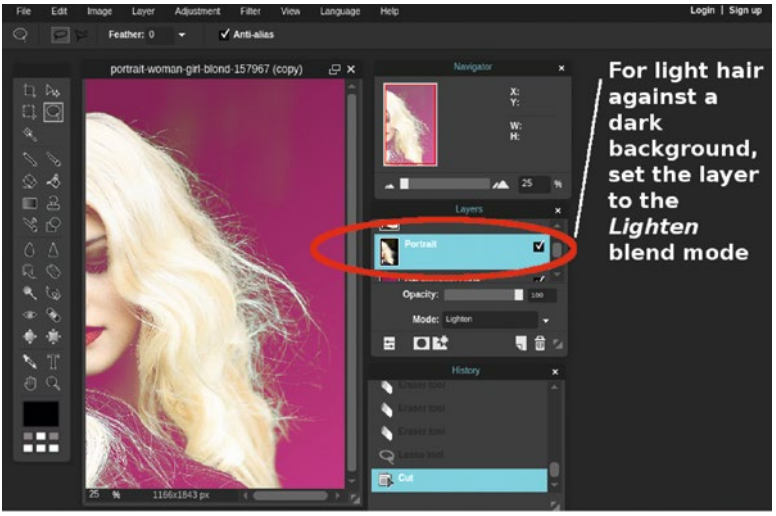

Figure 8-19. *For light hair against a dark background, set the layer to the Lighten blend mode*

Summary

This chapter described several techniques for removing unwanted elements, adding elements, and replacing backgrounds.

In the first tutorial, unwanted items were removed by borrowing surrounding portions of the image and using the Clone Stamp tool to help blend it in for a seamless edit.

Next, we added an image of a cockatoo to go along with the macaw by using a layer mask. Using the Brush tool, it was "painted" in, and the fringe (excess) image data was removed using the Eraser tool.

In the last tutorial, we replaced the background of the image of a young woman. By using a layer with the Darken blend mode, the curly hair was kept intact, making the process fairly easy.

The next chapter covers using some of the adjustments and filters to create some fun projects.

CHAPTER 9

Artistic Effects Using Adjustments and Filters

Pixlr Editor is a useful tool for adding effects to images to achieve a variety of artistic results. In Chapter 3, we looked at each adjustment and filter to see what effect is produced. In this chapter, we'll work with a few in the upcoming tutorials to see get a good idea of the editing potential they offer.

In this chapter, we'll learn the following:

- *Creating Shallow Depth-of-Field*: In this part, we'll use the Gaussian blur filter and the layer mask to emphasize the subject of an image.
- *Creating a Partial Effect*: In this tutorial, we'll apply the Old Photo adjustment to part of the image while leaving the rest as is.
- *Creating a Distressed Fence Mural*: This part demonstrates how to use a combination of filters and layer blend modes to create a fence mural.

Creating Shallow Depth-of-Field

In this tutorial, we'll learn how to put more emphasis on the macaw by digitally creating a shallow depth-of-field effect.

TUTORIAL 20: DEPTH-OF-FIELD TO EMPHASIZE THE SUBJECT

Using Gaussian Blur and the Layer Mask

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Open the image titled `Ch09_Macaw (For Effects).jpg` found in the `Ch09 Practice Images` folder.

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2. Duplicate the background layer *twice* (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
3. Click the first duplicate layer to make it active. Rename it `Blurred` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Open the Gaussian blur dialog box (Filter ➤ Gaussian Blur). Leave at the default radius setting of 50 (Figure 9-1), then click OK to apply the filter.

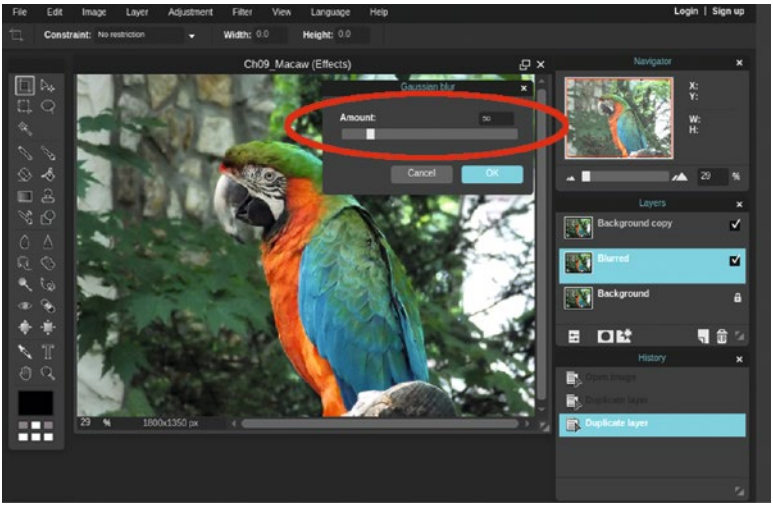

Figure 9-1. *Leave the Gaussian blur filter setting at 50, then click OK to apply*

5. Click on the second (top) duplicate layer to make it active. Rename it `DOF` (short for depth-of-field) using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
6. Add a layer mask using the Toggle Layer Settings dialog (the DOF layer will seem to disappear, but it's still there).
7. Click the zBrush tool icon (or press B on your keyboard). Select the hard, 30-pixel diameter brush from the presets.
8. Using the slider, set the hardness value to 75 (Figure 9-2).

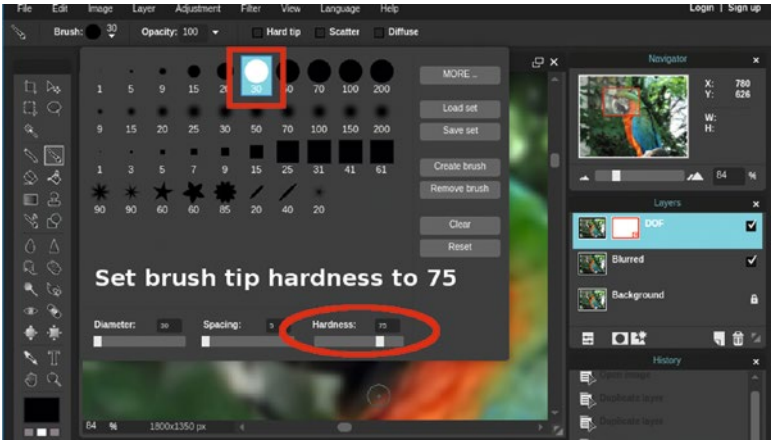

Figure 9-2. *Set the hardness value to 75*

9. Click in the layer mask to make it active and paint along the edge of the macaw to apply the overlay (Figure 9-3). Work in a series of short strokes (zoom in close as needed).

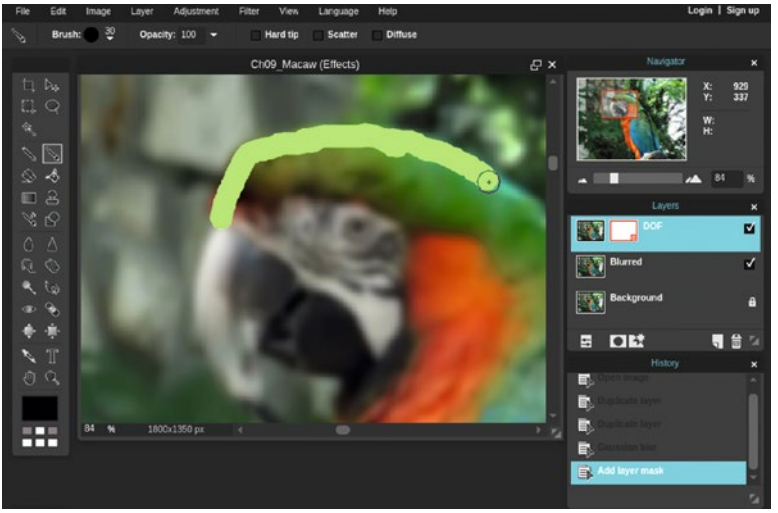

Figure 9-3. *Paint in the layer mask to apply the overlay along the edge*

10. Continue working all the way around—if you go outside of the edge, use the Eraser tool to correct (Figure 9-4).

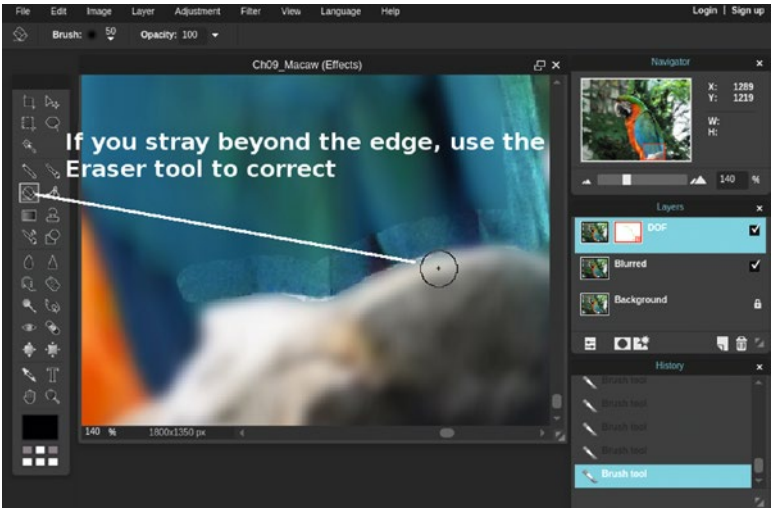

Figure 9-4. *The Eraser tool can be used to make corrections if you mistakenly go beyond the edge of the macaw*

11. Once you've gone all the way around the macaw, increase the Brush tool's tip size to 100 and paint in the layer mask to reveal the rest of the macaw in focus (Figure 9-5).

Figure 9-5. *Increase the brush size to reveal the rest of the macaw in focus*

Figure 9-6 shows the before and after comparison. This technique helps the subject stand out from the background. When finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 9-6. *Before and after comparison*

Creating a Partial Effect

In this tutorial, we'll work with the image of an old car. The Old Photo adjustment will be applied to background of the image, while revealing the rusty "patina" of the car.

TUTORIAL 21: CREATING A PARTIAL EFFECT

Applying the Old Photo Adjustment to Part of an Image

In the upcoming exercise, we'll work with an image of an old car and applying the Old Photo adjustment to portions of the image.

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Open the image titled `Ch09_Vintage Car.jpg` found in the `Ch09 Practice Images` folder.
2. Duplicate the background layer *twice* (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer). Rename the first duplicate layer `Old Photo` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
3. Rename the second duplicate (top) layer `Partial Effect`.
4. Click the layer named `Old Photo` to make it active. Apply the Old Photo adjustment (Adjustment ➤ Old photo).
5. Click the layer named `Partial Effect` to make it active.

6. Add a layer mask using the Toggle Layer Settings dialog box (the `Old Photo` layer should be revealed).
7. Click the Brush tool icon (or press B on your keyboard). Select the hard, 30-pixel diameter brush from the presets.
8. Using the slider, set the hardness value to 75.
9. Paint in the layer mask around the edge of the car. Work around the windows (Figure 9-7).

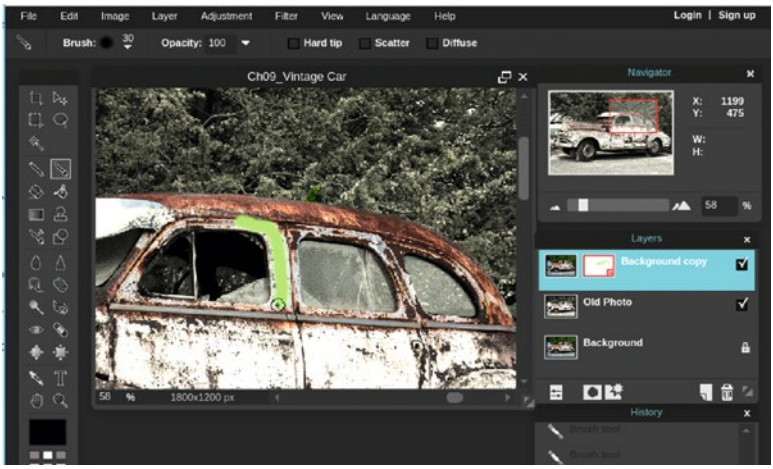

Figure 9-7. *Work around the edge and the windows of the car*

10. Paint within the wheel hubs to reveal the rust (Figure 9-8).

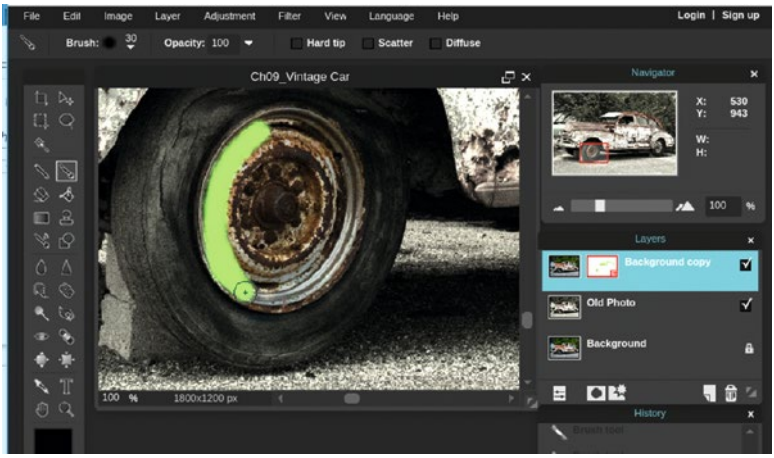

Figure 9-8. *Work within the wheel hubs to reveal the rust*

11. Select the 100-pixel diameter brush and work within the rest of the layer mask to reveal the rest of the car's original "patina" (Figure 9-9).

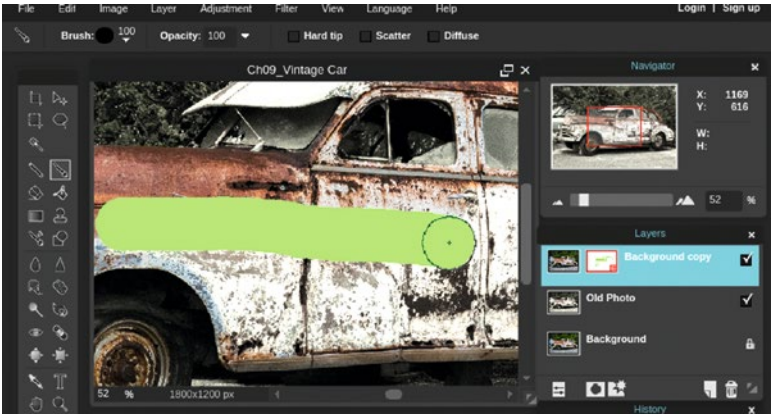

Figure 9-9. *Use a large brush to reveal the rest of the car's patina*

Figure 9-10 shows the before and after comparison. This technique helps create an interesting effect. When finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 9-10. *Before and after comparison*

Creating a Distressed Fence Mural

In this tutorial, we'll apply the image of a tiger to an old, wooden fence create the effect of a distressed mural.

TUTORIAL 22: CREATING A DISTRESSED FENCE MURAL

Using A Combination of Filters and Blend Modes

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Open the image titled `Ch09_Wooden Fence.jpg` found in the `Ch09 Practice Images` folder.
2. Open the image titled `Ch09_Tiger.jpg` found in the `Ch09 Practice Images` folder as a layer (Layer ➤ Open Image as Layer).
3. Rename the layer `Tiger` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
4. Open the Pastels dialog box (Filter ➤ Pastels). Set the Size to 4 then click OK to apply the filter (Figure 9-11).

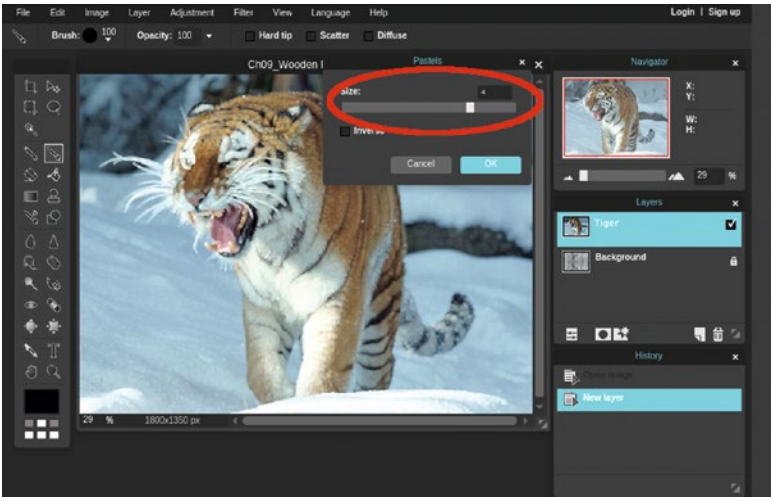

Figure 9-11. *Set the Size setting to 4 in the Pastels filter dialog box, then click OK to apply the filter*

5. Open the Posterize Adjustment dialog box (Adjustment ➤ Posterize). Set the Level to 4 (Figure 9-12).

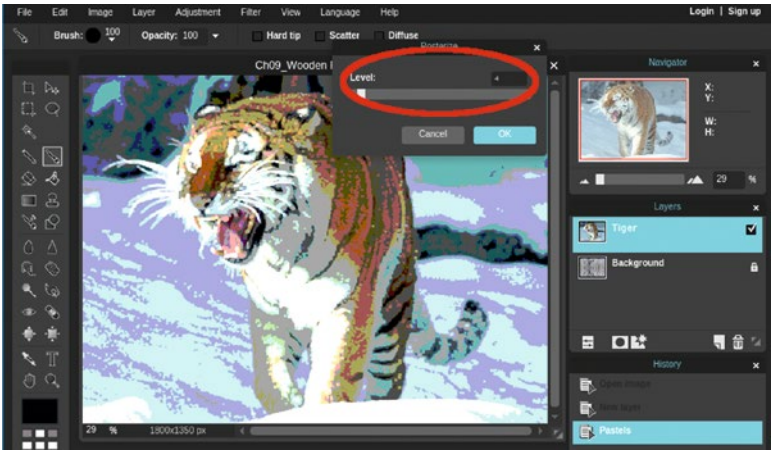

Figure 9-12. *Set the Level setting to 4 in the Posterize Adjustment dialog box, then click OK to apply the filter*

6. Using the Toggle Layer settings, change the blend mode from Normal to Overlay (Figure 9-13). The tiger image has the appearance of being painted on the fence.

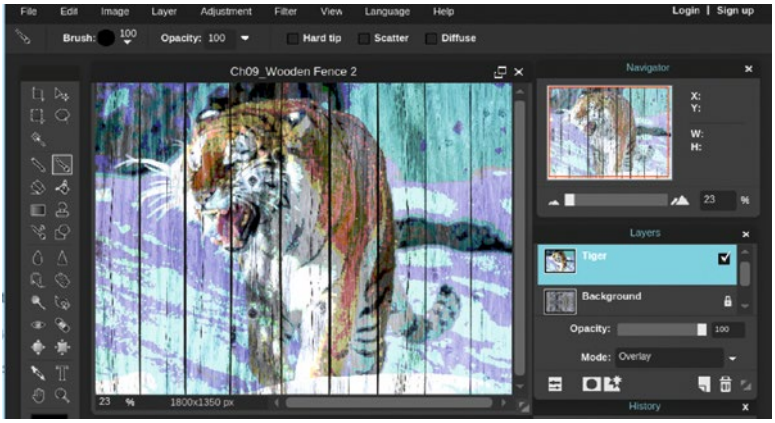

Figure 9-13. *The tiger image has the appearance of being painted on the fence*

7. Click the Eraser tool icon (or press E on your keyboard). Select the hard, 30-pixel diameter brush from the presets.

8. Open the Brush Presets dialog box, then click More.

9. Under the Artistic heading, click the option labeled `Dirt-2mb` then click Add (Figure 9-14). These brushes will now be loaded into the Brush Options dialog box.

Figure 9-14. *Under the default Artistic heading, click Dirt-2mb, followed by Add*

10. Select the 950-pixel wide brush indicated in Figure 9-15.

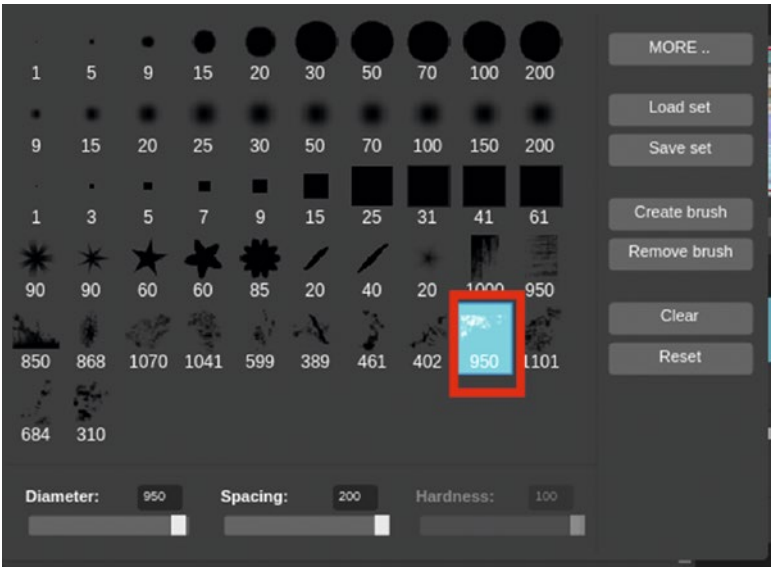

Figure 9-15. *Select the 950-pixel wide brush indicated in this figure*

11. Position it in the upper-left corner and click. This will erase the pixels in the shape of the brush and create a weathered, worn effect, revealing the underlying wood of the fence (Figure 9-16).

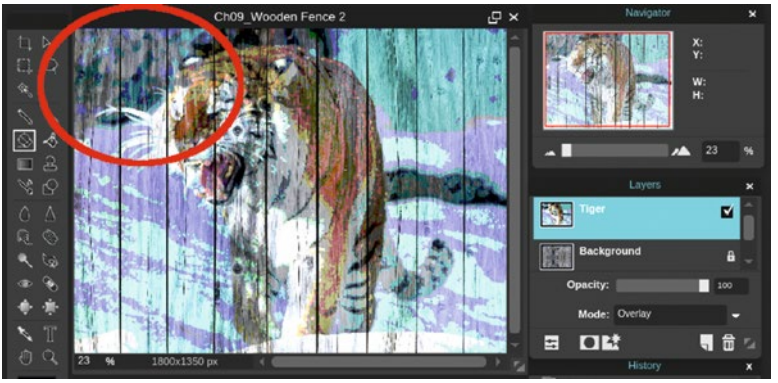

Figure 9-16. *Click in the upper-left corner to erase the pixels as shown*

12. Next, select the brush indicated (also 950 pixels wide), as shown in Figure 9-17.

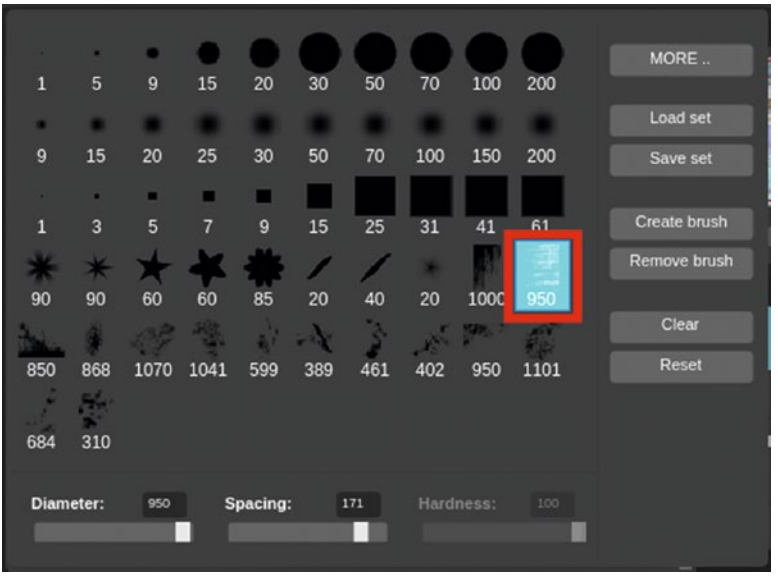

Figure 9-17. *Select the 950-pixel wide brush indicated in this figure*

13. Position the brush in the right side as indicated in Figure 9-18. Click to erase the pixels.

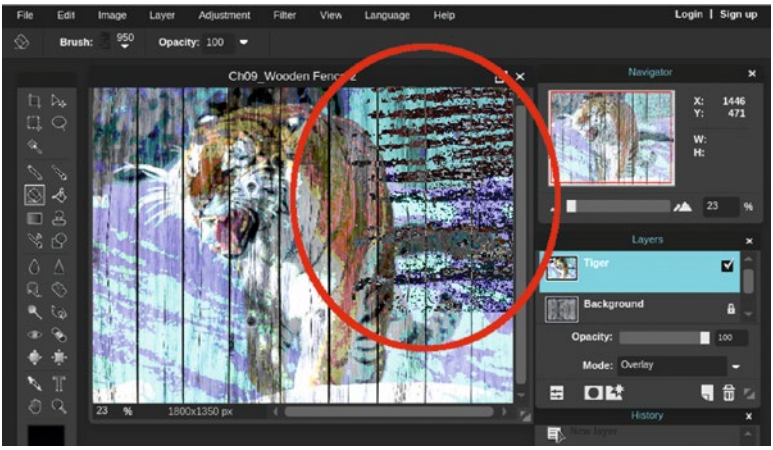

Figure 9-18. *Click in the right side to erase the pixels as shown*

14. Select the 1101-wide brush indicated in Figure 9-19.

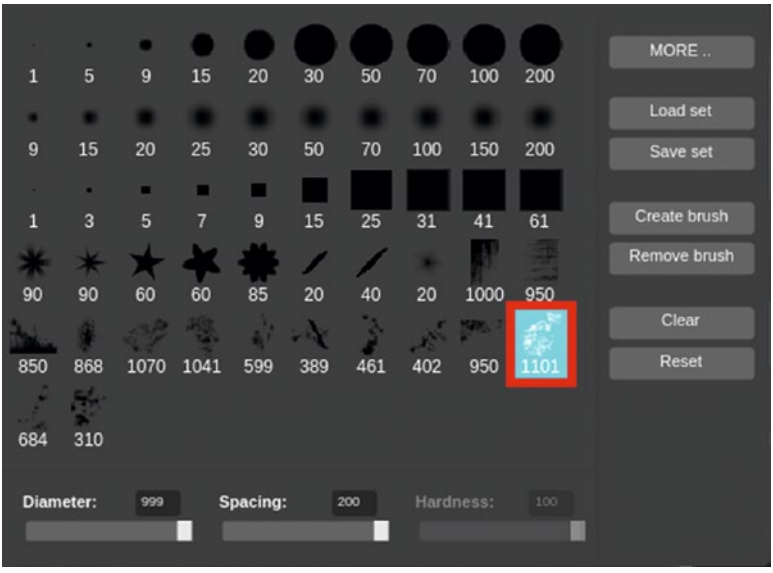

Figure 9-19. *Select the 1101-pixel wide brush indicated in this figure*

15. Position approximately as shown in Figure 9-20 and click to remove the pixels.

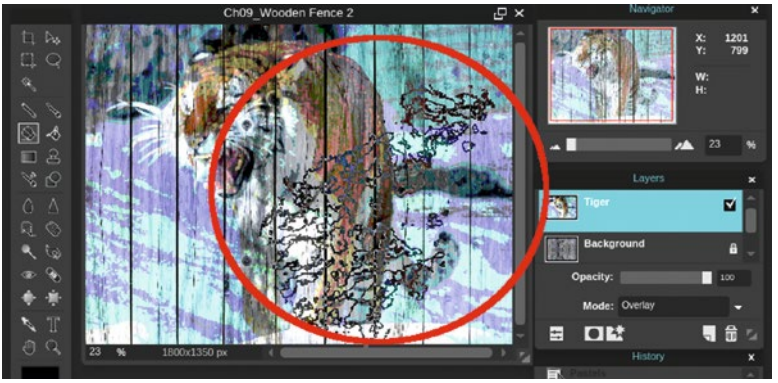

Figure 9-20. *Click in the area indicated in this figure to remove the pixels*

16. For the final brush, click the 1041-pixel wide brush indicated in Figure 9-21.

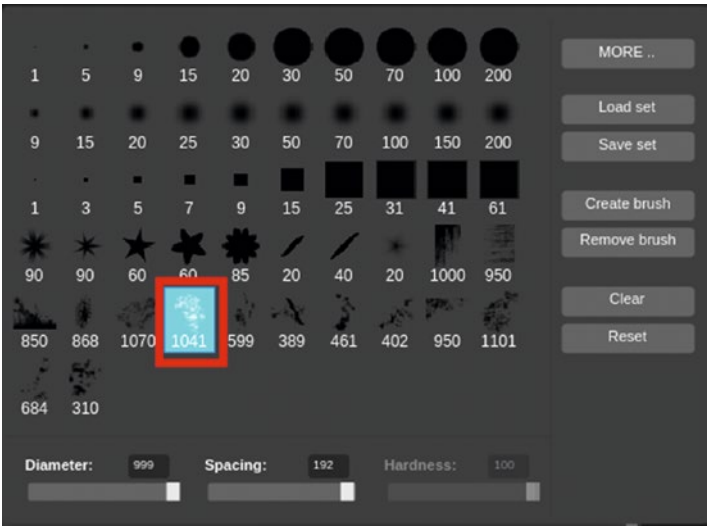

Figure 9-21. *Select the 1041-pixel wide brush indicated in this figure*

17. Position most of the brush in the lower-left corner, as indicated in Figure 9-22. Click to remove the pixels.

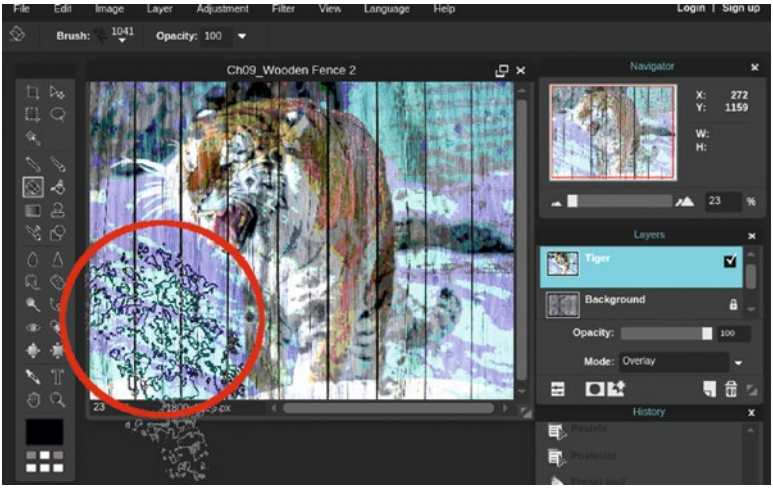

Figure 9-22. *Click in the area indicated in this figure to remove the pixels*

Figure 9-23 shows the final result—your version should be reasonably close to this example. When finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 9-23. *The final result should bear a close resemblance to this example*

Summary

This chapter described several techniques for using adjustments and filters for creating artistic effects.

The Gaussian blur filter was used to create a shallow depth-of-field effect on the image of the Macaw, helping it to stand out from the background.

In the next tutorial, a partial effect was applied. The Old Photo adjustment is a good fit for the image, but by using a layer mask, the "patina" of the old car was maintained.

In the last tutorial, a "distressed" mural was created by applying the image of a tiger over a wooden fence and using a combination of the Pastels filter, the Posterize adjustment, the Overlay Blend mode. An assortment of brushes to erase certain areas of the image were used to give it a weathered appearance.

In the next chapter, we'll use Pixlr Editor to create two graphic illustrations and a (fictitious) business card.

CHAPTER 10

Creating Graphic Illustrations

Until now, we've used Pixlr Editor to work with photographic images. As you've undoubtedly learned, it's a very capable tool for image editing. It's also a capable tool for creating raster-based illustrations. In this chapter, we'll tap into the "inner artist" and create a few digital drawings using Pixlr Editor. Here's what we'll cover:

- *Creating a Night Sky Illustration*: In this part, we'll create an illustration of a star filled night sky with a crescent moon.
- *Creating a Billiard Illustration*: This part provides step-by-step instructions for creating an illustration of a billiard ball used in the game of pool.
- *Creating a Business Card*: In this final tutorial, we'll create a business card for a fictitious consignment shop.

Note Because you'll be creating most of the images from scratch in this chapter, you don't need to be concerned with duplicating the examples 100%. The goal of these tutorials is to acquaint the reader with techniques for creating images. Of course, it's a good idea to strive to get as close as possible.

Creating a Night Sky Illustration

In this tutorial, we'll learn how to draw a sky with stars (using the Brush tool) and a partial moon. Because creating the stars is a rapid process, your illustration will likely have a different star pattern than those shown in the upcoming figure(s).

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P. Whitt, *Beginning Pixlr Editor*, DOI 10.1007/978-1-4842-2698-8_10

TUTORIAL 23: CREATING A NIGHT SKY

Drawing a Star-Filled Night Sky Using Pixlr Editor

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Create a new image using the default presets. Name the image `Night Sky` (or use a name of your choosing).
2. Click the Gradient tool icon.
3. Click the Gradient icon in the Tool Options bar—after the Options window opens, select the blue-to-black gradient (Figure 10-1).

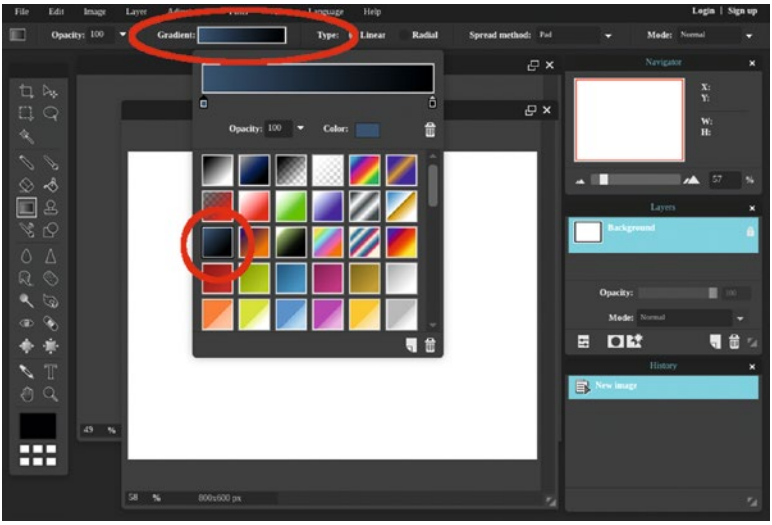

Figure 10-1. *After launching the options window, select the blue-to-black gradient*

4. Click and drag vertically from bottom to top on the Background layer to make a sky ranging from deep blue (in the lower portion) to black at the uppermost part (Figure 10-2).

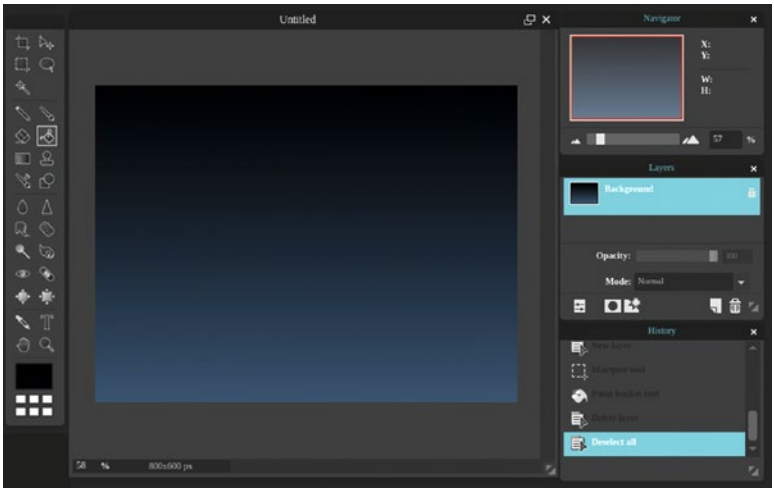

Figure 10-2. *The gradient that will serve as the night sky color*

5. Create a new layer (Layer ➤ New Layer) and rename it `Moon` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
6. Click the Marquee tool icon (or press M on your keyboard).
7. Select the Elliptical option, set the Constraint to Aspect Ratio, and set the Feather radius to 10.
8. On the layer named Moon, click and drag to make a circular selection about 220-240 pixels in diameter near the upper-right corner (Figure 10-3).

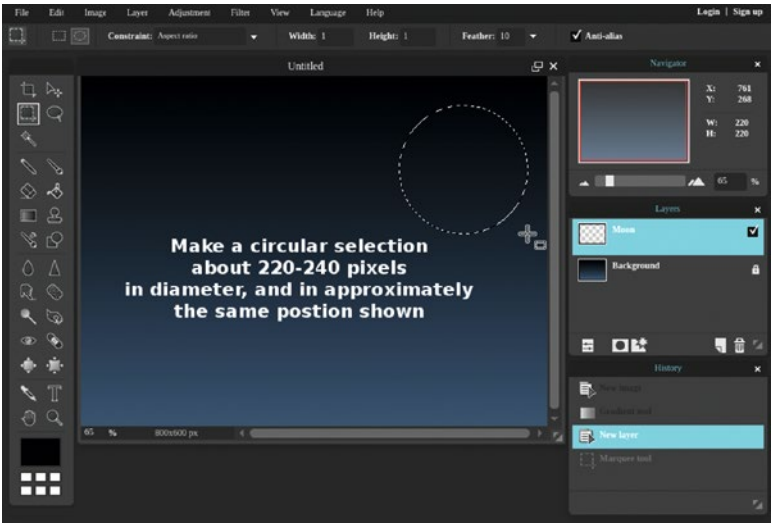

Figure 10-3. *Use the Marquee tool to make a circular selection where the moon will be*

9. The next step is to fill the circular selection with a pale yellow color. Click in the Set Main Color swatch to open the Color Selector dialog box.

10. Select a yellow hue using the numeric inputs: R-255, G-248, and B-122 (Figure 10-4). Click OK when you're done.

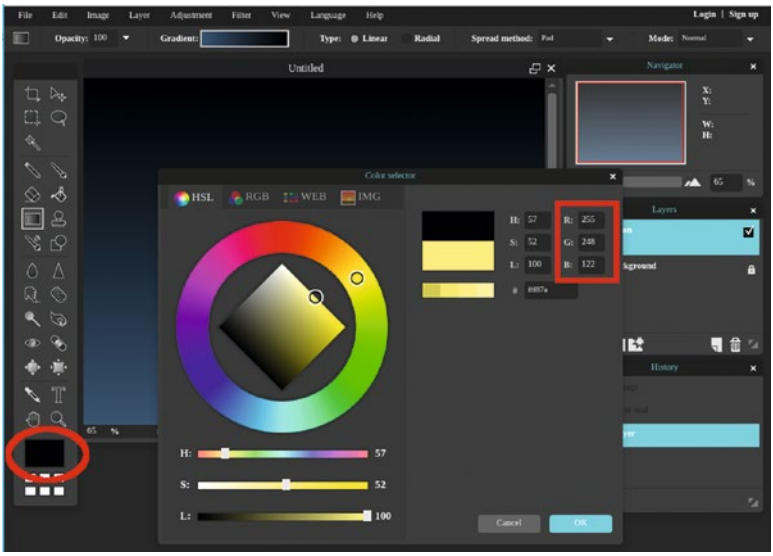

Figure 10-4. *Launch the Color Selector dialog box and use the numeric settings shown to achieve a pale yellow*

11. Click the Paint Bucket tool icon or press the letter G on your keyboard.
12. Fill the circular selection with the pale yellow.
13. Deactivate the selection (Edit ➤ Deselect All).
14. We'll now create the unlit portion of the moon. Duplicate the layer named Moon (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer).
15. Turn the duplicate layer's visibility off by clicking the option box to uncheck it.
16. Click on the original layer named Moon to make it active and invert the color (Adjustment ➤ Invert).
17. Using Toggle Layer Settings, change the mode from Normal to Multiply and lower the opacity to 20% (Figure 10-5).

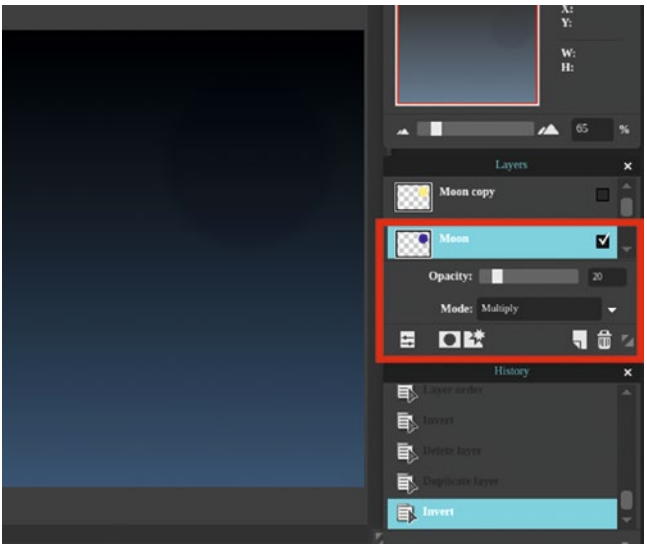

Figure 10-5. *Use the Toggle layer settings to change the mode from Normal to Multiply and lower the opacity to 20%—this creates the unlit portion of the moon that's barely visible*

18. Click the layer named Moon Copy and click the checkbox to make it visible again.
19. Click the Marquee tool icon (or press M on your keyboard).
20. Select the Elliptical option, set the Constraint to Aspect ratio, and set the Feather radius to 10.

21. Draw a circular selection overlapping the image of the moon (Figure 10-6).

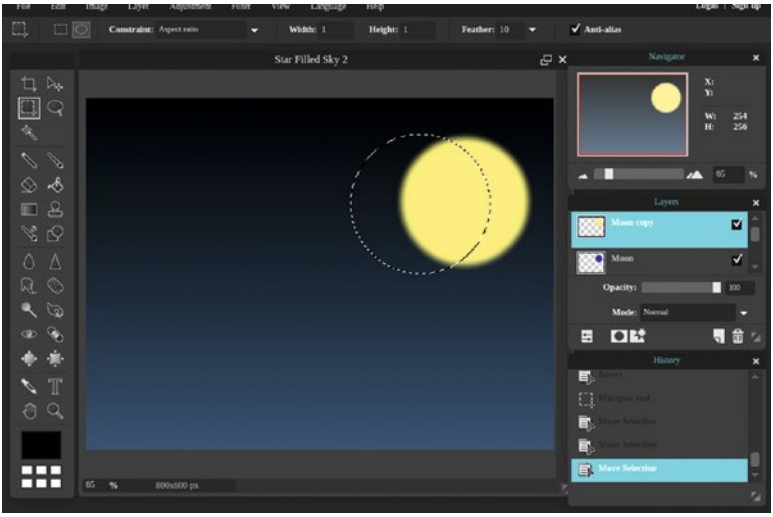

Figure 10-6. *Draw a circular selection overlapping the moon*

22. Remove the selected pixels (Edit ➤ Clear), leaving a crescent-shaped moon (Figure 10-7).

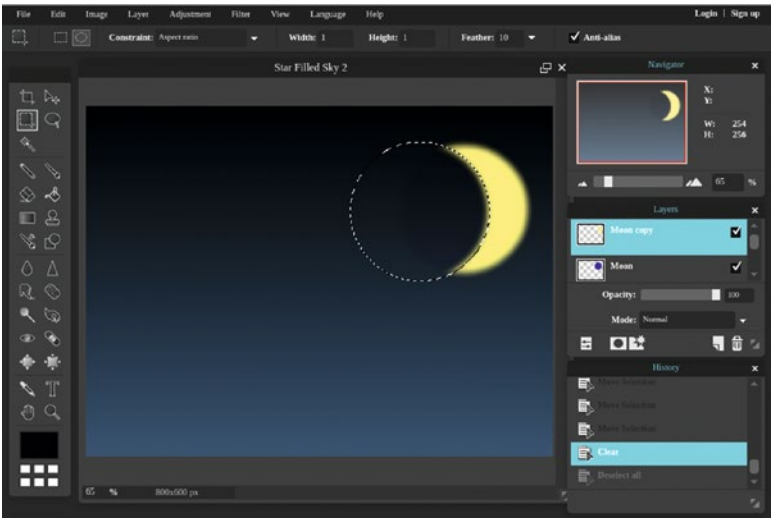

Figure 10-7. *Clear the selected pixels to leave a crescent shape*

23. Deactivate the selection (Edit ➤ Deselect all).
24. Create a new layer (Layer ➤ New Layer). Rename it `Stars` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
25. Set the main color to white.
26. Click the Brush tool icon (or press B on your keyboard).
27. Select the brush 5 pixels in diameter from the brush presets.
28. Make numerous small stars by clicking around the image (Figure 10-8).

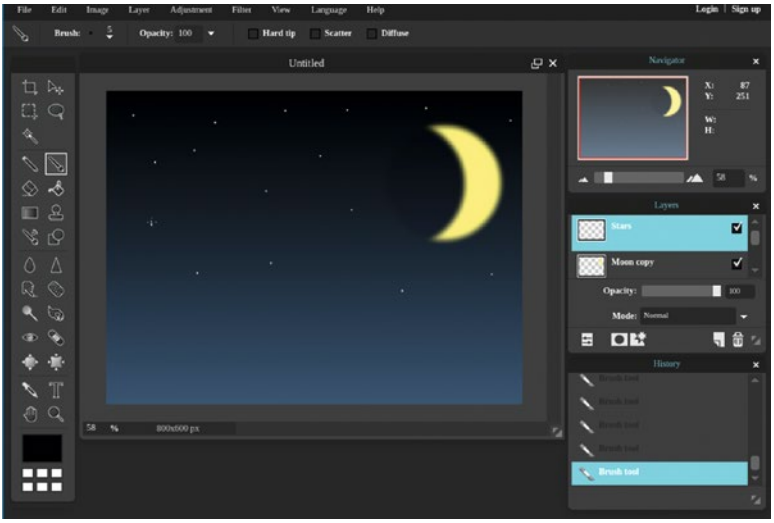

Figure 10-8. *Use a 5-pixel diameter brush to make small stars*

29. Select various other brushes to create stars of varying sizes—you can choose your own or use Figure 10-9 as a guide (shown larger than scale).

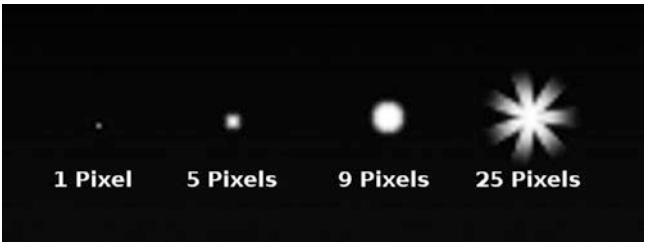

Figure 10-9. *Guide to brush tip sizes to use for stars*

Your work should bear a reasonably close resemblance to the example shown in Figure 10-10—understandably, the star pattern in yours will likely differ. When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Figure 10-10. *The final result should bear a reasonably close resemblance to this example*

Creating a Billiard Illustration

In this tutorial, we'll learn how to draw a billiard resting on a felt covered tabletop. There are quite a few steps involved in this tutorial, but it shouldn't be too difficult to handle.

TUTORIAL 24: CREATING A BILLIARD

Drawing an Eight Ball Using Pixlr Editor

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Create a new image using the default presets. Name the image `Billiard` (or a name of your choosing).
2. Click in the Set Main Color swatch to open the Color Selector dialog box. Select a green hue using the numeric inputs: R-0, G-99, and B-33 (Figure 10-11). Click OK when you're done.

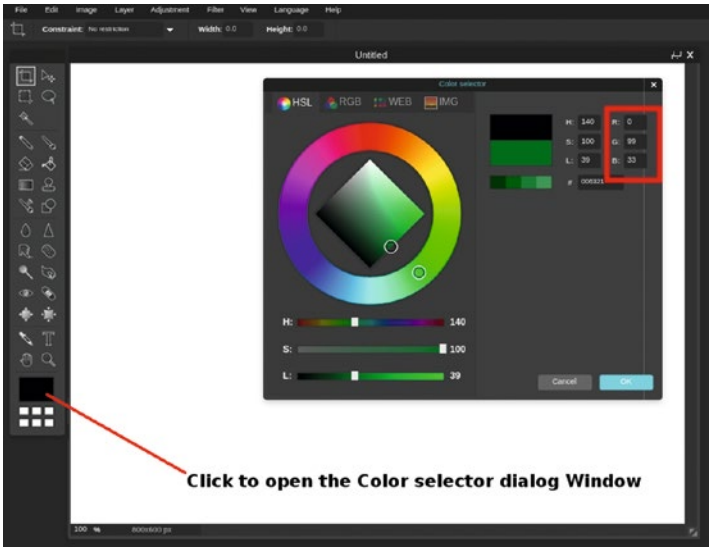

Figure 10-11. *Launch the Color Selector dialog box and use the numeric settings shown to achieve the green hue that will be used*

3. Click the Paint Bucket tool icon (or press G on your keyboard).
4. Click in the background layer to fill it with the green hue.
5. Add noise to give it some texture (Filter ➤ Noise). Set the amount to 50 (Figure 10-12).

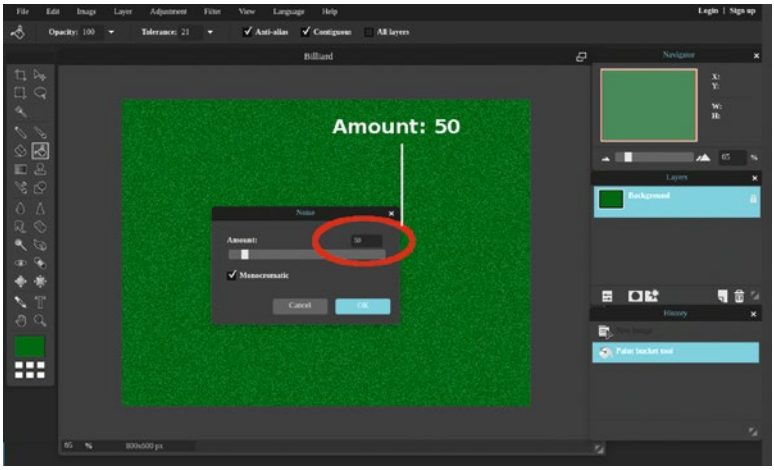

Figure 10-12. *Using the Noise filter to create the appearance of texture*

6. To smooth it out and make it appear more like felt, open the Gaussian Blur dialog box (Filter ➤ Gaussian Blur). Set the amount to 11 (Figure 10-13).

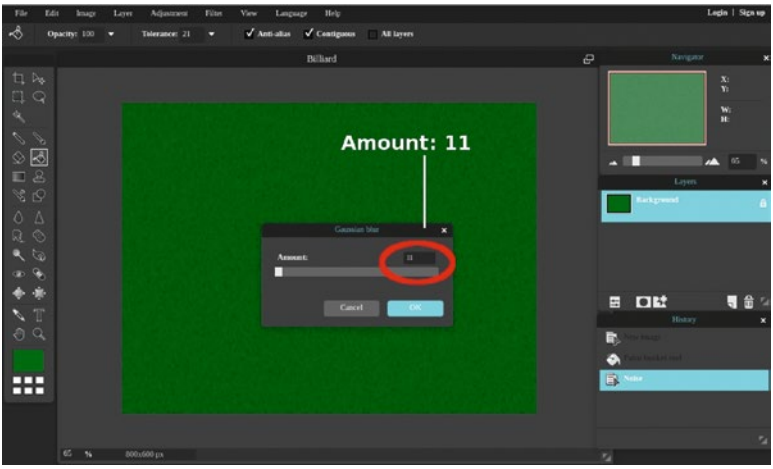

Figure 10-13. *Using the Gaussian Blur filter to smooth the noise out*

7. Create a new layer (Layer ➤ New Layer). Rename the new layer `Ball` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
8. Click the Marquee tool icon (or press M on your keyboard).
9. Select the Elliptical option and set the Constraint to Aspect ratio. Make sure the Anti-alias box is checked.
10. Click and drag on the layer named Ball to create a circular selection until the diameter is about 334 pixels—it will display as W: 334 and H: 334 in the Navigator Palette (Figure 10-14).

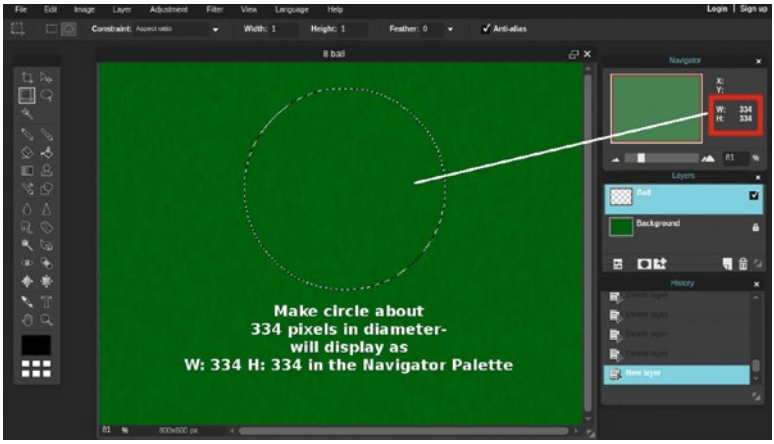

Figure 10-14. *Use the Marquee tool to make a circular selection*

11. Select black for the main color.
12. Click the Paint Bucket tool icon or press the letter G on your keyboard.
13. Fill the selection with black.
14. Deactivate the selection (Edit ➤ Deselect All).
15. Duplicate the layer (Layer ➤ Duplicate Layer) named Ball (this will be used to create the small, white circle to display the "8" character on).
16. Rename the duplicate layer `Inner Circle` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
17. Invert the color from black to white (Adjustment ➤ Invert).
18. Select the Free Transform tool (Edit ➤ Free Transform). Hold the Shift key and drag downward from the upper-left corner to maintain the aspect ratio and keep the circle centered. The white circle's diameter should be about half that of the black circle's (Figure 10-15).

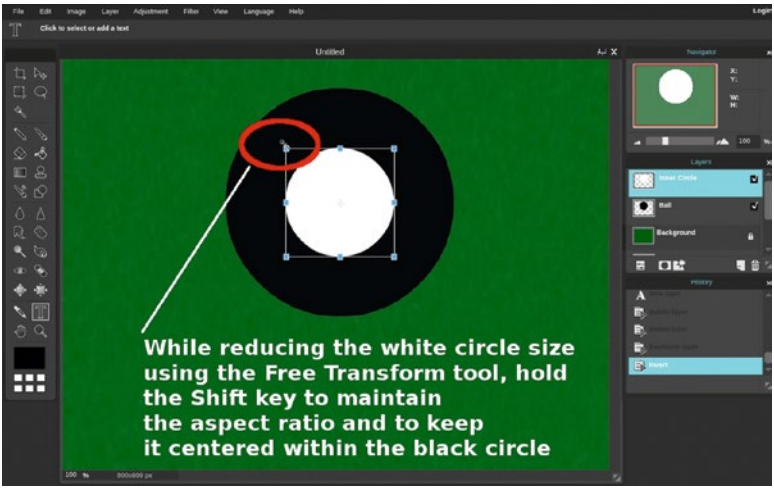

Figure 10-15. *Creating the small white circle to display the "8" character*

19. Select the Type tool icon (or press T on your keyboard).

20. Type the number 8 using a sans-serif font. (For this tutorial, Abyssinica SIL was used—if it isn't installed on your computer simply choose a similar typeface.)

21. Increase the size to 130 and change the Style from Regular to Bold (Figure 10-16). Use the Move tool to center the "8" if necessary.

Figure 10-16. *Use a bold, sans-serif font (size 130) for the digit*

22. Create a new layer (Layer ➤ New Layer) and rename it `Reflection` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
23. Click the Marquee tool icon (or press M on your keyboard).
24. Select the Elliptical option, set the Constraint to No Restriction, and set the Feather radius to 15.
25. Click and drag on the layer named Reflection to create a oval just above the white circle (Figure 10-17).

Figure 10-17. *Make an oval selection just above the white circle*

26. Select white to use for the main color (if it isn't already).
27. Click the Paint Bucket tool icon (or press G on your keyboard).
28. Fill the selection with white.
29. Deactivate the selection (choose Edit ➤ Deselect All).
30. Lower the layer's opacity to 75%. Now the billiard has a nice shine (Figure 10-18).

Figure 10-18. *The billiard now appears to have light reflected*

31. Create a new layer (Layer ➤ New Layer) and rename it `Shadow` using the layer thumbnail's textbox. Move the layer below the one named Ball in the stack.

32. Click the Marquee tool icon or press M on your keyboard.

33. Select the Elliptical option (be sure to use the same settings as in Step 24).

34. Click and drag on the layer named Shadow to create a small oval just under the billiard (Figure 10-19).

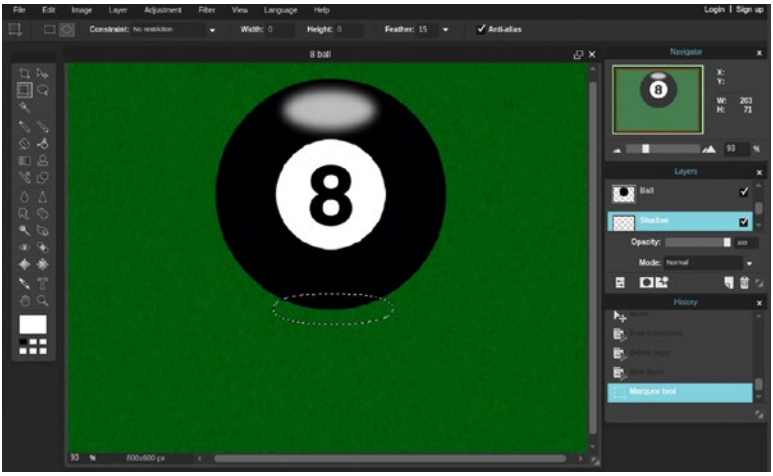

Figure 10-19. *Make an oval selection under the billiard to make a shadow*

35. Select black to use for the main color.
36. Click the Paint Bucket tool icon (or press G on your keyboard).
37. Fill the selection with black.
38. Deactivate the selection (choose Edit ➤ Deselect All).
39. Lower the layer's opacity to 75%.

Your work should look very much like the example shown in shown in Figure 10-20. When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

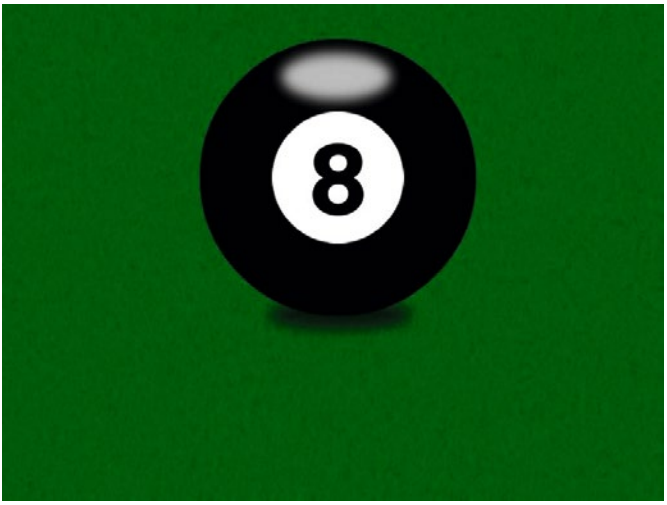

Figure 10-20. *The final result should look very much like this*

Creating a Business Card

Pixlr Editor is first and foremost an image editing application, not a page layout application. However, it can be used to create simple marketing materials such as business cards or small postcards in a pinch.

In this final tutorial, we'll design a business card for a fictitious consignment shop.

■ **Note** Pixlr Editor doesn't have pre-installed fonts—instead it works with the ones already installed on your computer. For the purposes of the tutorial that follows, I'll be using Times New Roman and Arial Narrow. If those fonts aren't installed on your computer, just choose the closest one(s) available.

TUTORIAL 25: CREATING A BUSINESS CARD

Using Pixlr Editor to Design a Card for Fictitious Business

To do this exercise, follow these steps:

1. Create a new image using these dimensions—Width: 1050 X Height: 600. These dimensions equal the size of a standard business card measuring 3.5" x 2" when printed at 300 DPI.

■ **Note** Printing service bureaus (both brick-and-mortar and online) usually require a slightly larger width and height to allow for trimming. When creating work you plan to have printed, check their requirements first.

---

2. Click the Gradient tool icon.
3. Click the Gradient icon in the Tool Options bar—after the Options window opens, select the light gray-to-white gradient (Figure 10-21).

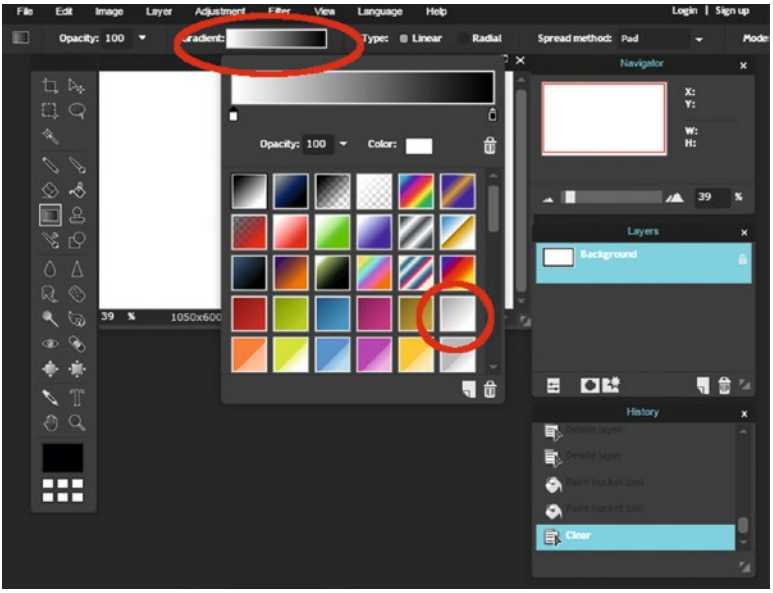

Figure 10-21. *After launching the Options window, select the light gray-to-white gradient*

4. Click and drag from top-left corner to the bottom-right corner on the Background layer (the same direction as shown in the swatch).
5. Next, the silhouette of the woman will be placed on the background as a separate layer. To do this, open the `Ch10_Silhouette in Dress.png` file (Layer ➤ Open Image as Layer).
6. Rename the layer `Figure` using the layer thumbnail's textbox.
7. Using the Free Transform tool (Edit ➤ Free Transform), reduce the size of the silhouette and position it in the area, as shown in Figure 10-22.

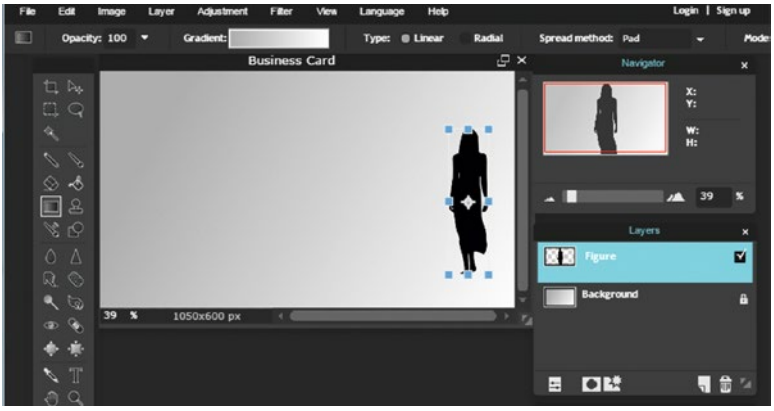

Figure 10-22. *Position the silhouette as shown*

8. Click in the Set Main Color swatch to open the Color Selector dialog box.
9. Select a reddish hue using the numeric inputs: R-135, G-23, and B-23 (Figure 10-23). Click OK when you're done.

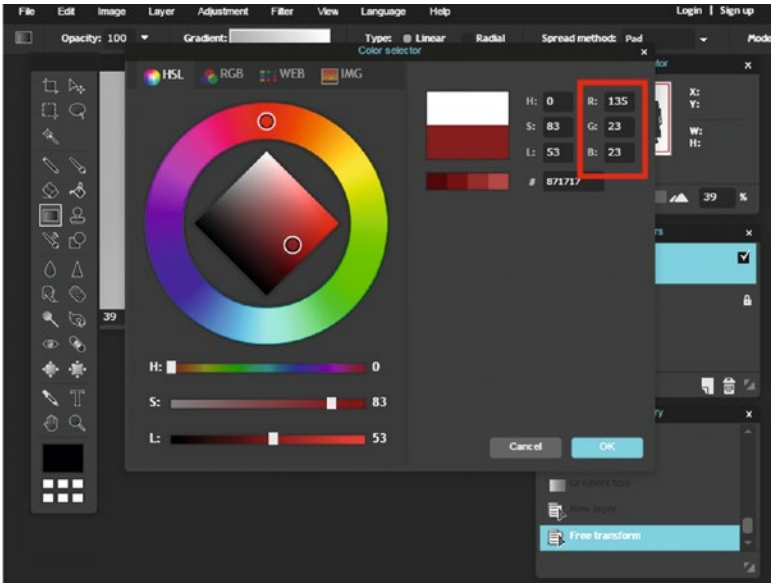

Figure 10-23. *Launch the Color Selector dialog box and use the numeric settings shown to achieve the reddish hue that will be used for the text*

10. Click the Type tool icon (or press T on your keyboard).

11. Type `Sally's Consignment Shop`, as shown in Figure 10-24. Use the Times New Roman font (or something similar if it's not installed on your computer). Make the size 80 and the style Italic. Click OK when you're done.

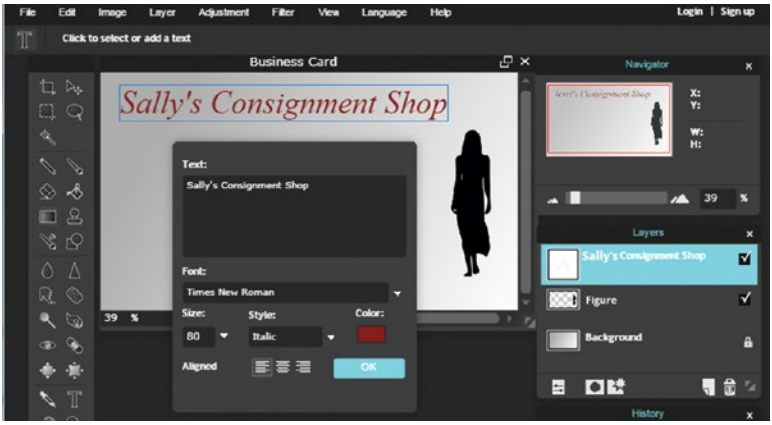

Figure 10-24. *Typing the fictitious business name using the Type tool*

12. Open the Layer Styles dialog box (Layer ➤ Layer Styles) and click the Bevels option. This will give the main text a raised, 3D effect (Figure 10-25). Click OK when you're done.

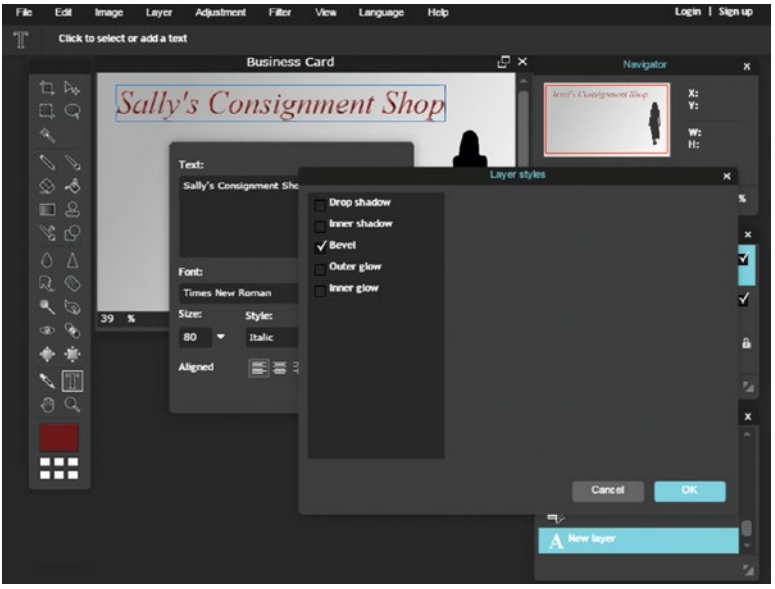

Figure 10-25. *Using the Bevels style gives the text a raised, 3D effect*

13. Open the Type tool again and type the company message below the name: *"Gently loved women's fashions for less"* (Figure 10-26). Use the Times New Roman (or similar) font. Make the size 40 and the style Italic. Click OK when you're done.

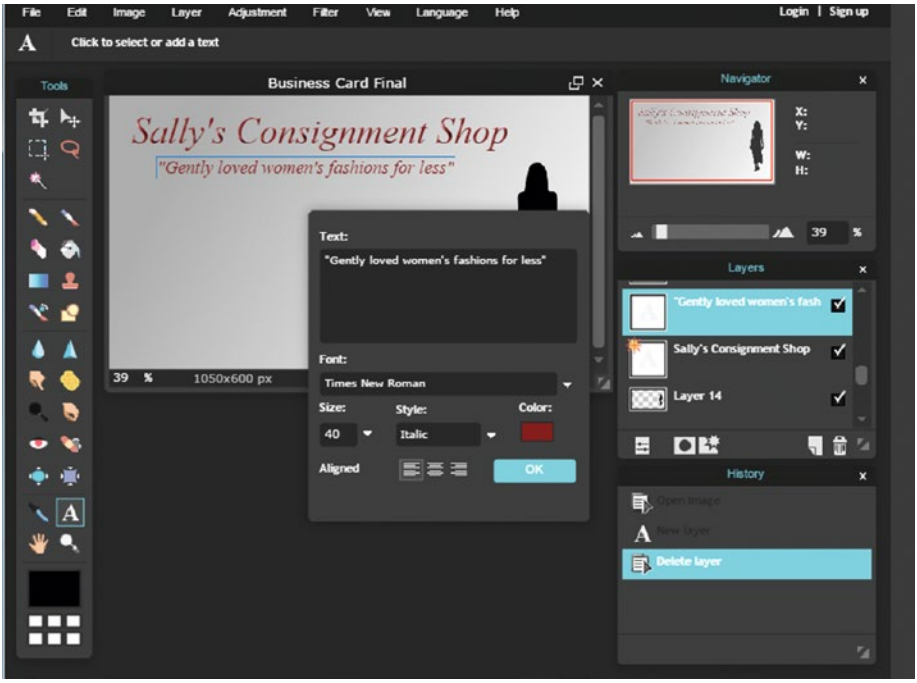

Figure 10-26. *Typing the company message just under the name*

14. Open the Type tool again and type the featured products in the center of the card:

    A wide variety of top-name dresses

    A wide variety of unique, vintage dresses

    Gently worn shoes

    Top name handbags

    Use the Arial Narrow (or similar) font. Make the size 28 and the style Regular (Figure 10-27). Click OK when you're done.

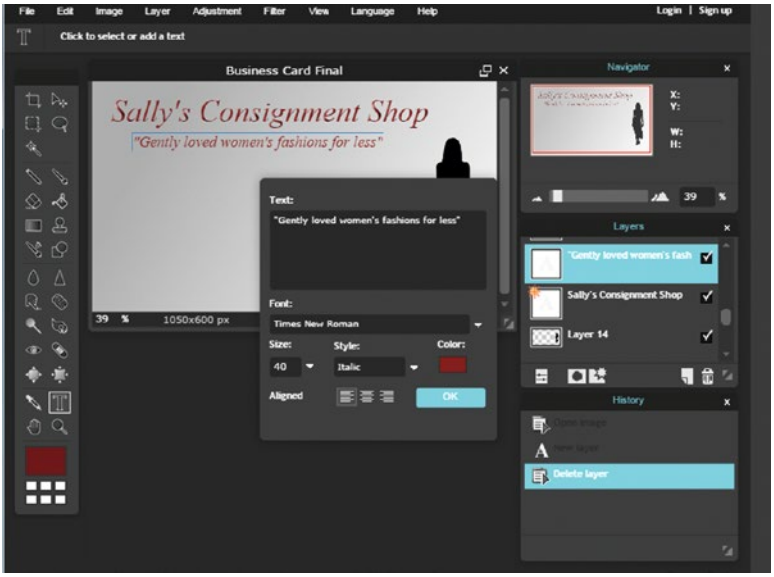

Figure 10-27. *Typing the company message just under the name*

15. Open the Type tool again and type this contact information along the bottom of the card:

    Sally Lynn-Owner

    123 Maple Lane, Suite 123 (Maple Plaza)

    Anytown, USA

    Phone: (123) 123-1234

    Use the Times New Roman (or similar) font. Make the size 40 and the style Italic (Figure 10-28). Click OK when you're done.

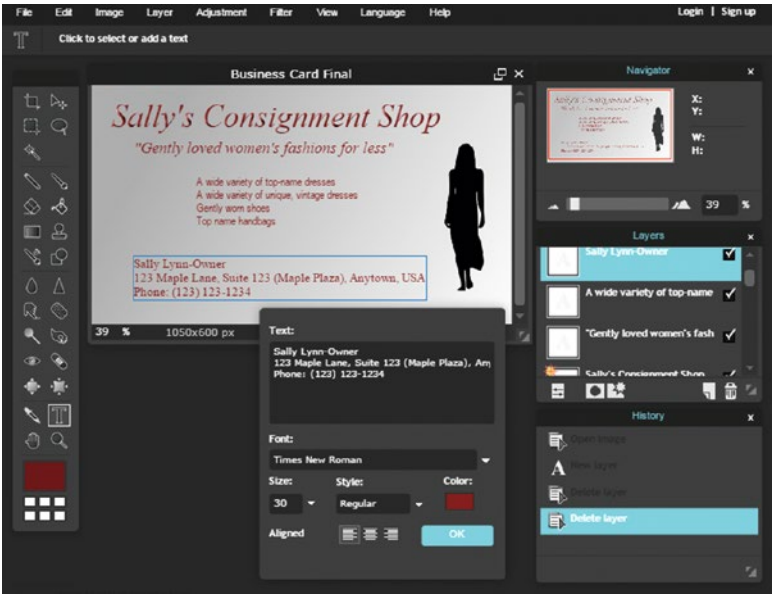

Figure 10-28. *Typing the contact information along the bottom of the card*

16. Use the Move tool to position each text layer as shown in Figure 10-29. The final result should be reasonably close. Of course, if font substitution was required, it will probably look somewhat different.

Figure 10-29. *The completed (fictitious) business card*

When you're finished, either close the image without saving or save it as a PXD file for future reference. *If you are a student, your teacher may instruct you to save the image with a certain name and in a certain location (such as a flash drive).*

Summary

Even though Pixlr Editor is designed primarily for editing photographic images, it can be used for creating pixel-based illustrations and for (to a limited degree) simple layouts such as business cards or postcards.

Conclusion

If you've completed all of the tutorials, congratulations! You did a great deal of work, and you've undoubtedly learned a great deal in the process. It's my hope that this book helped you gain some valuable knowledge and skills that you can use from now on.

Just remember, being good at photo editing takes time and practice, so keep going... and best wishes in your future endeavors.

APPENDIX A

Additional Resources for Pixlr Editor

You've seen a lot of examples in this book using the Pixlr Editor. This appendix directs you to a few sites that may be helpful in your image editing pursuits.

Additional Image Editing Applications

This section lists a couple of other free applications offered by Autodesk that are fun and easy to use.

Pixlr Express

www.pixlr.com/express/

Pixlr Express is excellent for basic editing tasks (such as cropping or adjusting contrast). It also has tons of effects, overlays, borders, and more (see Figure A-1).

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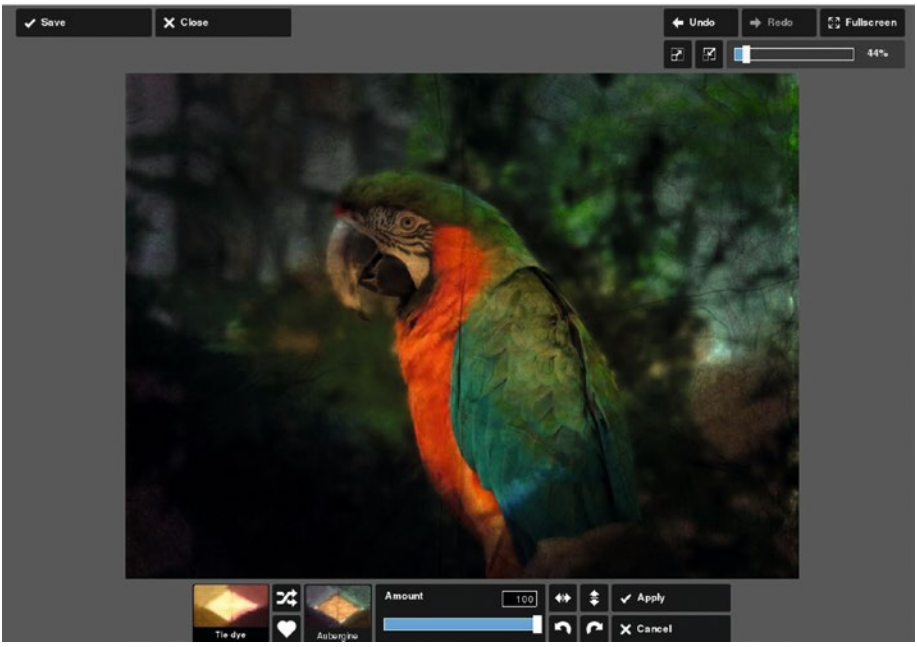

Figure A-1. *Pixlr Express offers basic editing functions, and lots of effects, overlays, and other fun options*

Pixlr Mobile

www.pixlr.com/mobile

With Pixlr Mobile, you can crop, rotate, and fine-tune your pictures on your mobile device. It's available from the App Store and Google Play.

Image Editing and Free Stock Images

If you've mastered the tutorials in this book, here are a few web sites that can provide you with images to help you hone your skills.

Retouch Pro

www.retouchpro.com

This web site (Figure A-2) contains tutorials on retouching and restoration. You must sign up for full access to the site, but it's free to join. There are various challenges you can take part in to test your skills. Retouch Pro also has a friendly and supportive community.

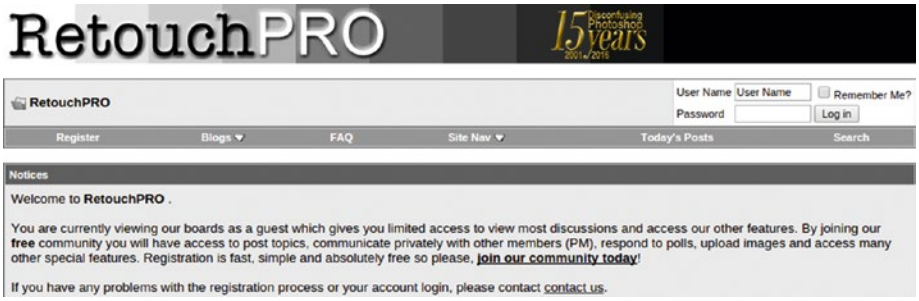

Figure A-2. *Retouch Pro is a useful web site to help hone your image editing skills*

Pexels

www.pexels.com

This web site (Figure A-3) offers free stock images that can be used for just about any purpose (even commercial use) without attribution. The only limitation is that people in the photos should not be portrayed in a bad light.

Figure A-3. *Pexels is an excellent source for free stock images*

Whitt's Image Works Free Digital Portrait Backgrounds

www.whittartworks.com/backgrounds/id14.html

This web site sells digital portrait backgrounds as digital downloads. There are several free examples available for download throughout the site (see Figure A-4). These backgrounds are useful in image editing and restoration work and graphic design (be sure to read the terms of use on the homepage).

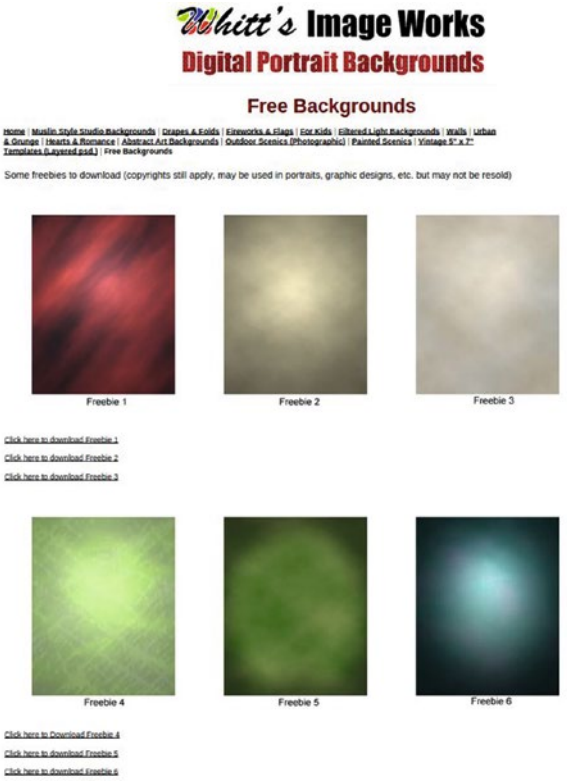

Figure A-4. *There are several free digital backgrounds available from this web site*

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