Refining Your Image:

Eliminate Distractions; Enhance Positives
Session 1

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Goals

1. Become more aware of distractions
2. Learn to draw the viewer's eye to your main character

The Equation:

Eliminating the Negative

+

Accentuating the Positive

=

Refined Image

Introduction

Do We Have a Blank Canvas?

- Other artists start with a blank “canvas”
- Is what we got what we saw?
- Eliminate or include: you choose
- Take a good image to an exceptional image

Disclaimers and a Caveat

- I haven’t perfected my images and I still miss things
- I’m more aware than I used to be
- We’re going on this journey together

- These techniques and approaches do not apply to images that fall into the category of photojournalism.

“

There are three images that go into a final photograph. The one you envision, the one you capture, and the one you finesse in the digital darkroom.”

- David duChemin

David duChemin

Foundational Principles of Refinement

Foundational Principles of Refinement

- Eliminate the negative and accentuate the positive
- Only serve your vision
- Fully engage with the scene, main character
- Assume it’s music or architecture
- Be picky and pay attention to details
- Don’t make a low score easy for the judge

First Half of the Equation: Eliminating the Negative

The Negatives: Definition of Distractions

What constitutes a distraction? Anything that:

- Seems introduced by the photographer (spot, noise, etc.)
- Makes it difficult to pay attention to the subject
- Draws attention away from the subject
- Disturbs or disrupts the viewer's progress through image
- Doesn't help tell the story, construct the mood, etc.
- Causes a "jarring" experience for the viewer

Why Do We Miss Distractions in Our Own Images?

We can be critical of *other* people's images, but…

- We're in a hurry to make the edits and post or print it
- We're unaware of how poorly a distraction is perceived
- Our thoughts are dominated by what attracted us to the scene
- Our memories of the experience of being there overwhelm the reality of the image

Take a Step Back—A Slight Digression

Envision

Capture

Refine

Icons designed by Anton Kalashnyk, iconfinder.com

Take a Step Back—A Slight Digression

Look out for:

- Busy background

Busy Background

RAW File

Take a Step Back—A Slight Digression

Look out for:

- Busy background
- Intrusions and visual clutter

Intrusions and Visual Clutter

Intrusions

RAW Files

Take a Step Back—A Slight Digression

Look out for:

- Busy background
- Intrusions and visual clutter
- Mergers

Merger

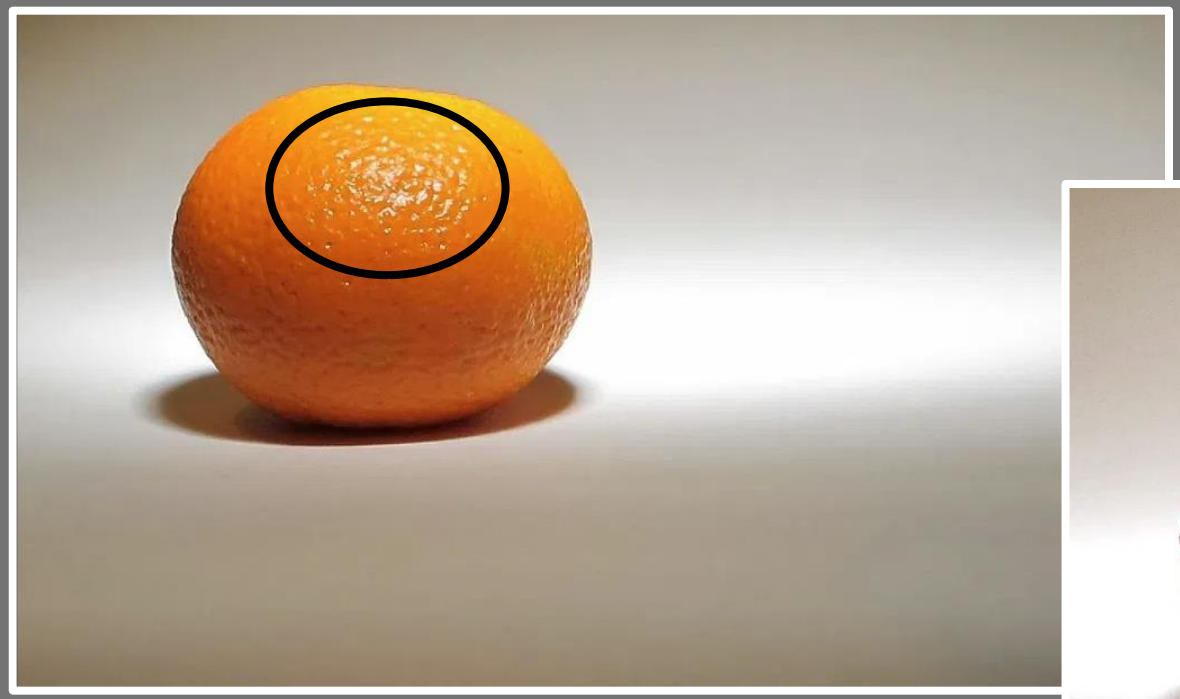
RAW File

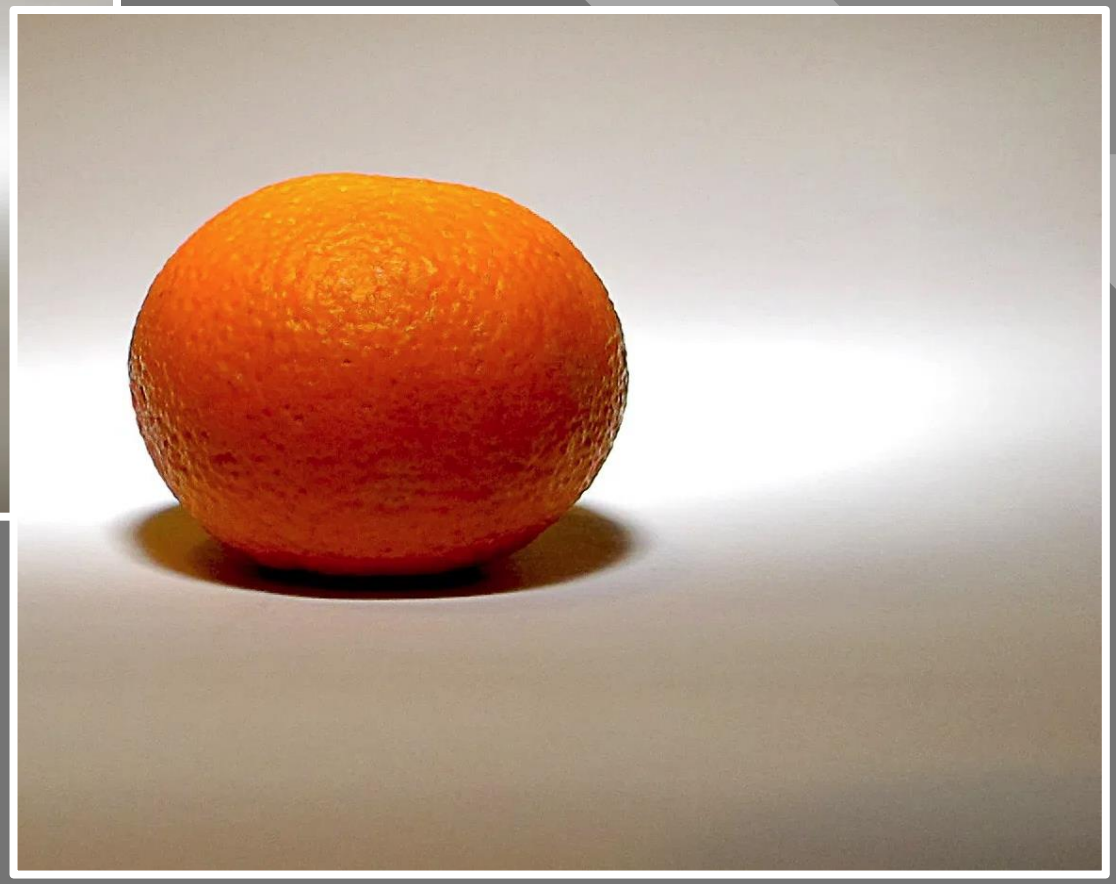
Take a Step Back—A Slight Digression

Look out for:

- Busy background
- Intrusions and visual clutter
- Mergers
- Bright spots or black holes

Bright Spots



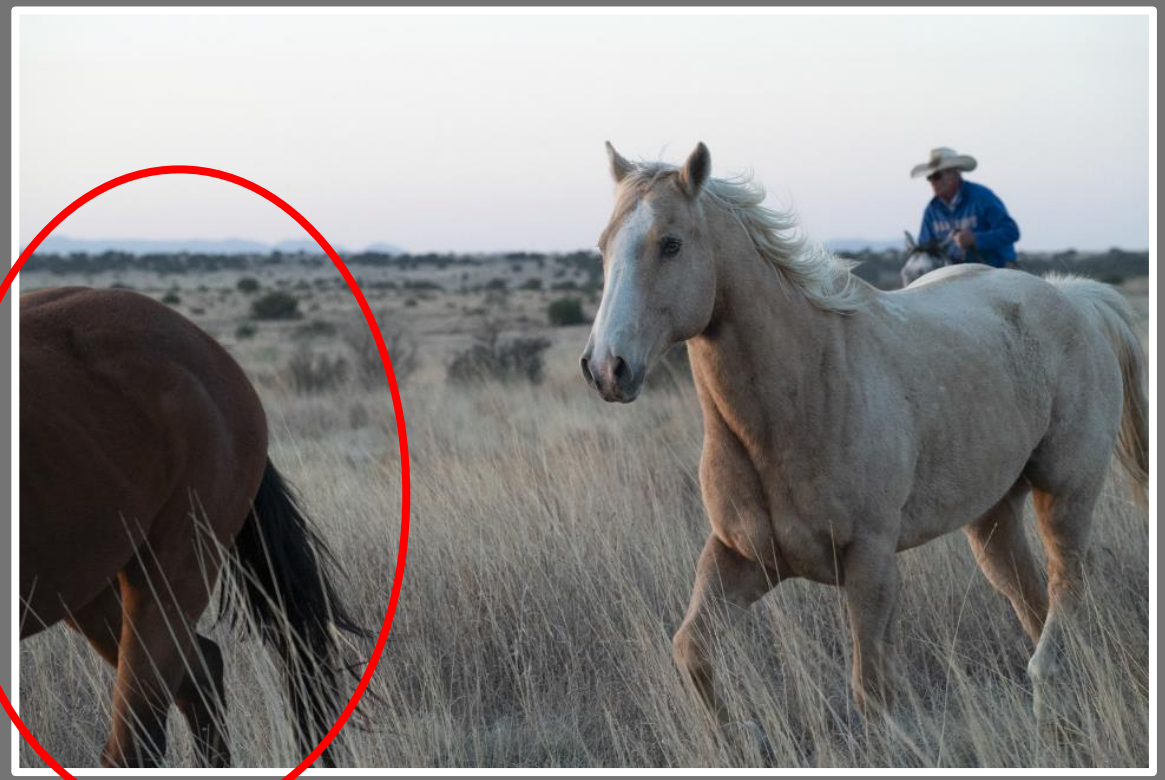


Take a Step Back—A Slight Digression

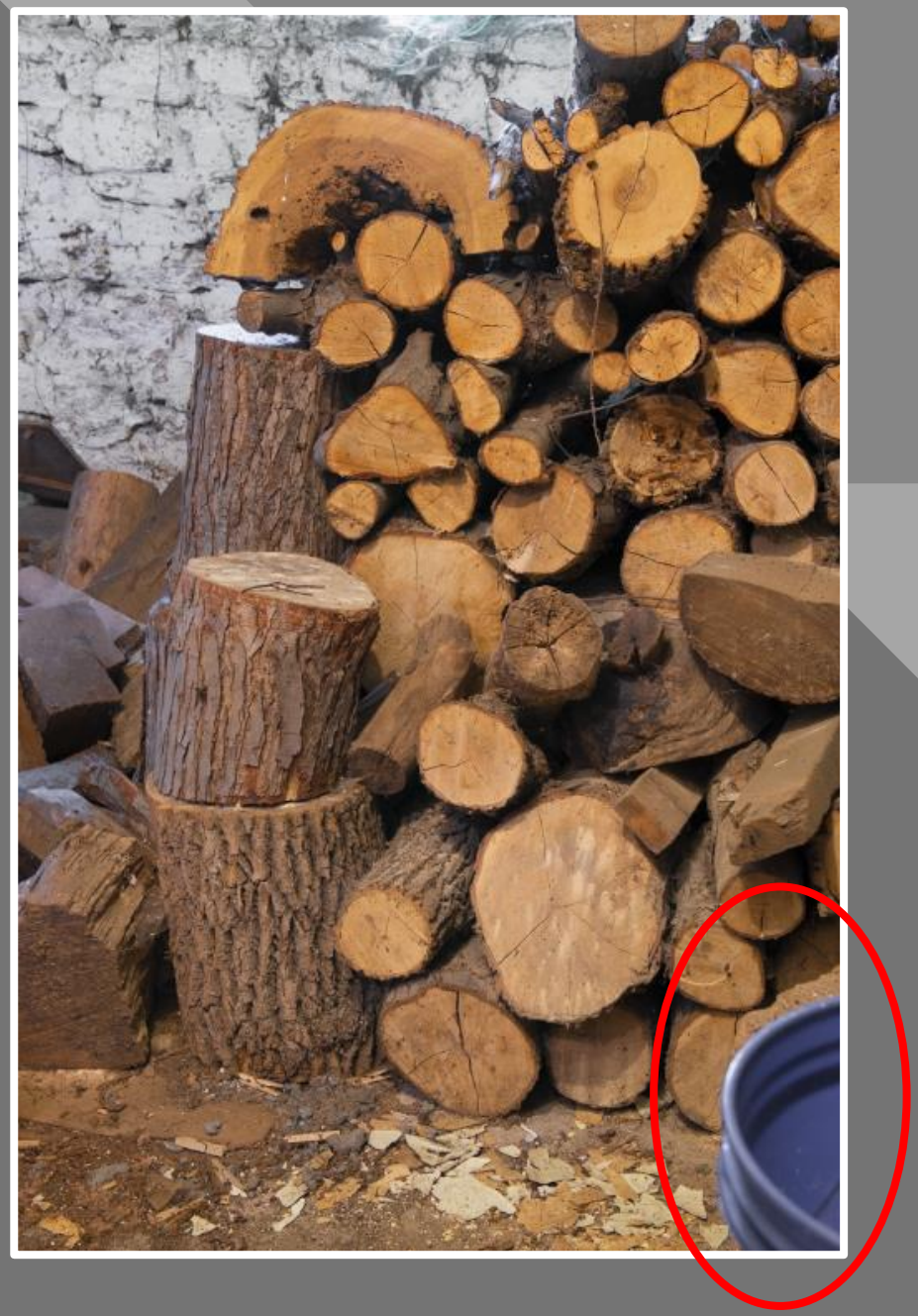
Look out for:

- Busy background
- Intrusions and visual clutter
- Mergers
- Bright spots or black holes
- Attention-grabbers

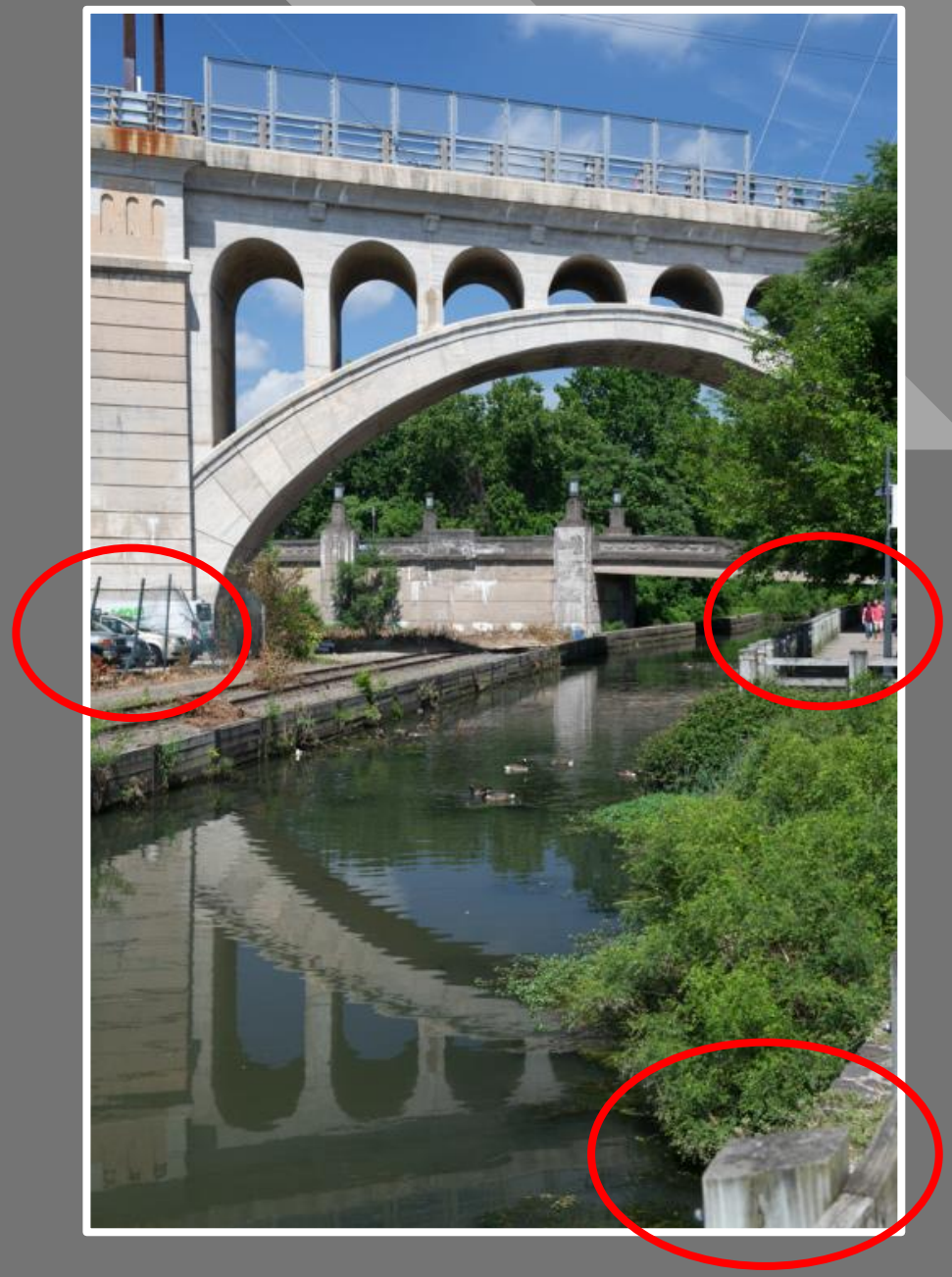
Attention-Grabbers



RAW Files



Attention-Grabbers



RAW File

Attention-Grabbers

RAW File

Attention-Grabbers

RAW File

Final File

Minimizing or Removing Distractions

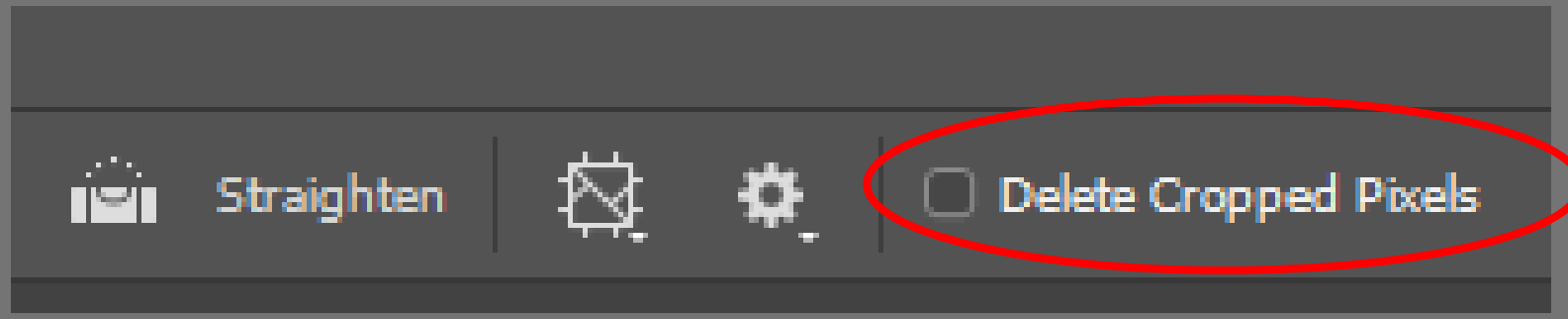
A Tool for Every Job

Cropping

- Use either at beginning or end of workflow
- Removes elements, tells different story, creates different mood
- Provides balance for the image
- Helps simplify an image
- Aspect ratio should fit the image, not vice versa

Cropping

- Experiment with different crop ratios (LR and PS)
- Beware of “Delete Cropped Pixels” in PS



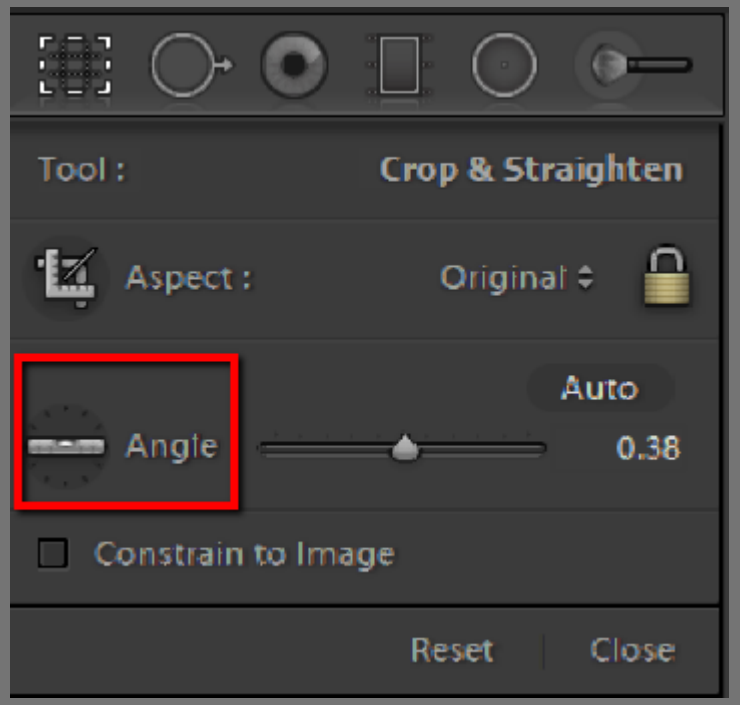
- Cropping first eliminates unnecessary enhancements
- Cropping last gives more time to engage with the image
- Crop should let the image “breathe”

Cropping

Nigel Danson

Horizon Leveling and Perspective Control

- Viewers often notice tilted horizon first



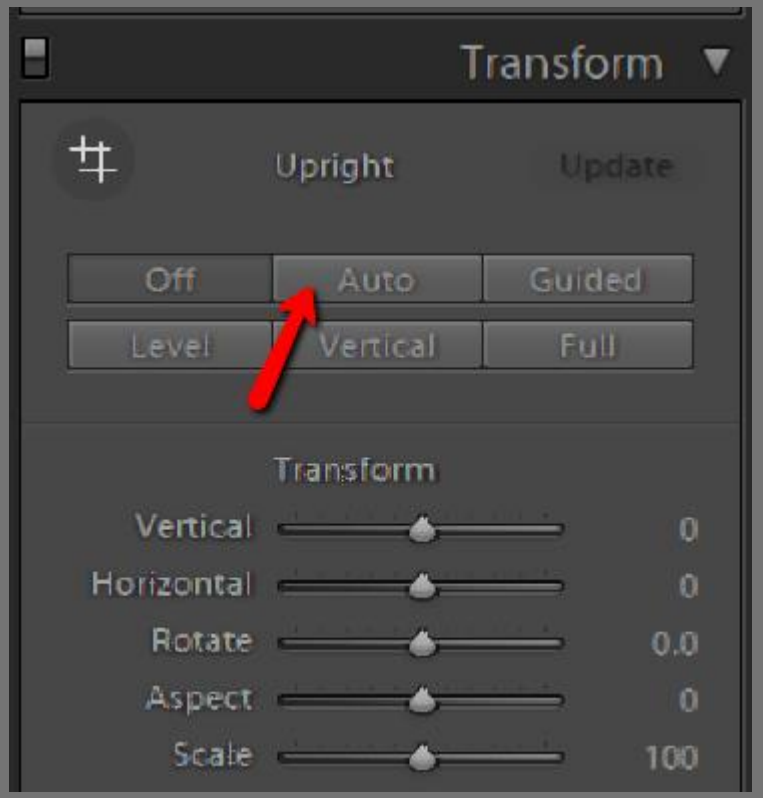
RAW Files

Horizon Leveling and Perspective Control

- Shooting upward makes everything appear to be leaning back
- Perspective correction in LR or PS makes the element appear more normal

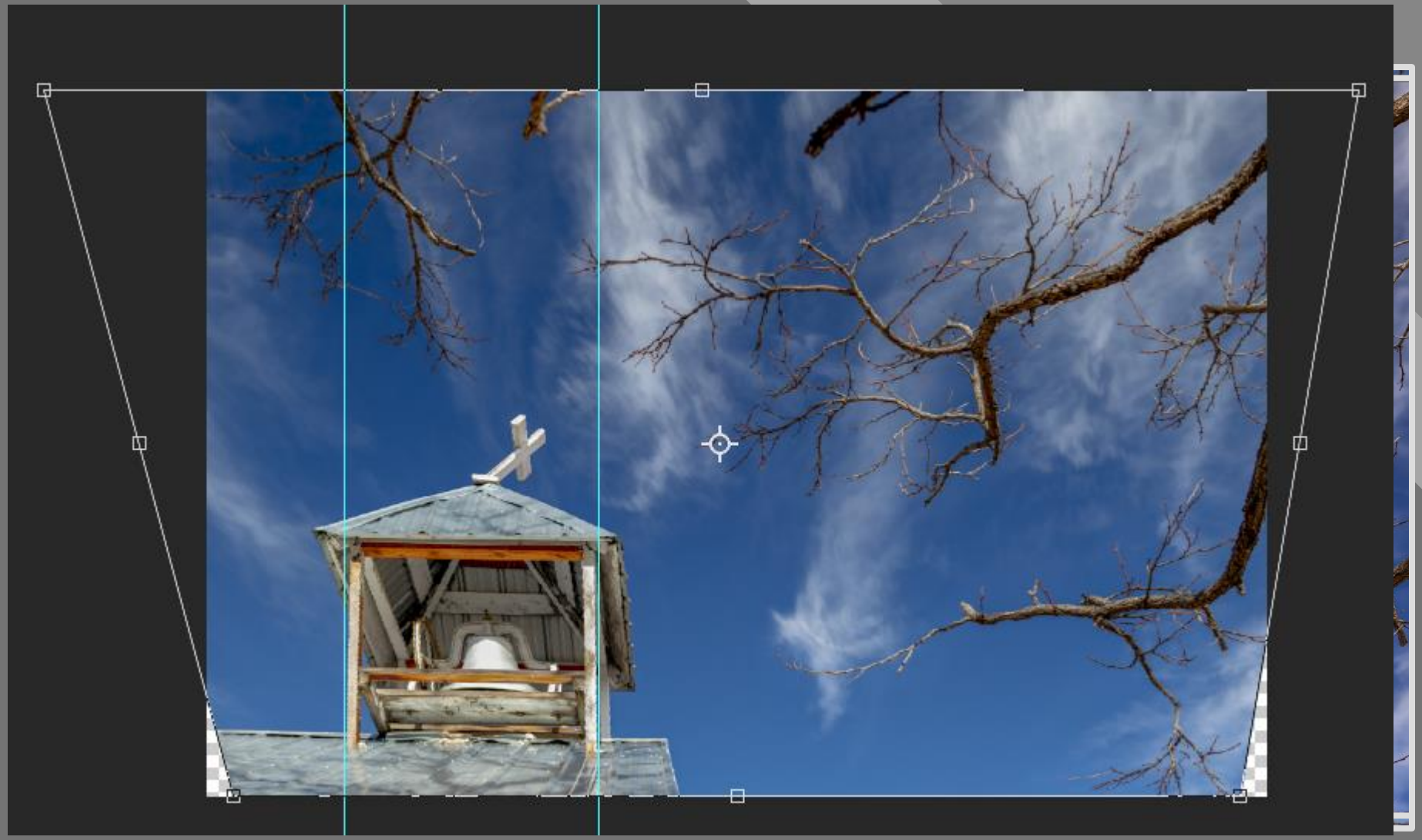
RAW File

Horizon Leveling and Perspective Control



Lightroom
Transform Panel

Horizon Leveling and Perspective Control



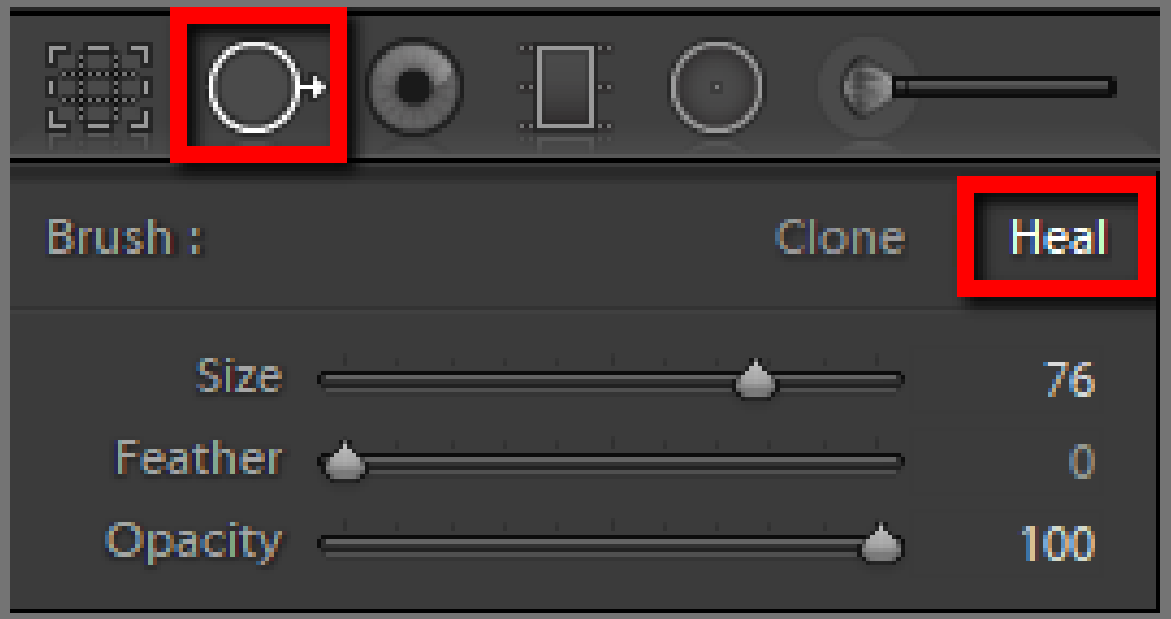
Photoshop
Transform
Perspective
Interface

Horizon Leveling and Perspective Control

RAW File

Final File

Removing Spots and Small Distractions

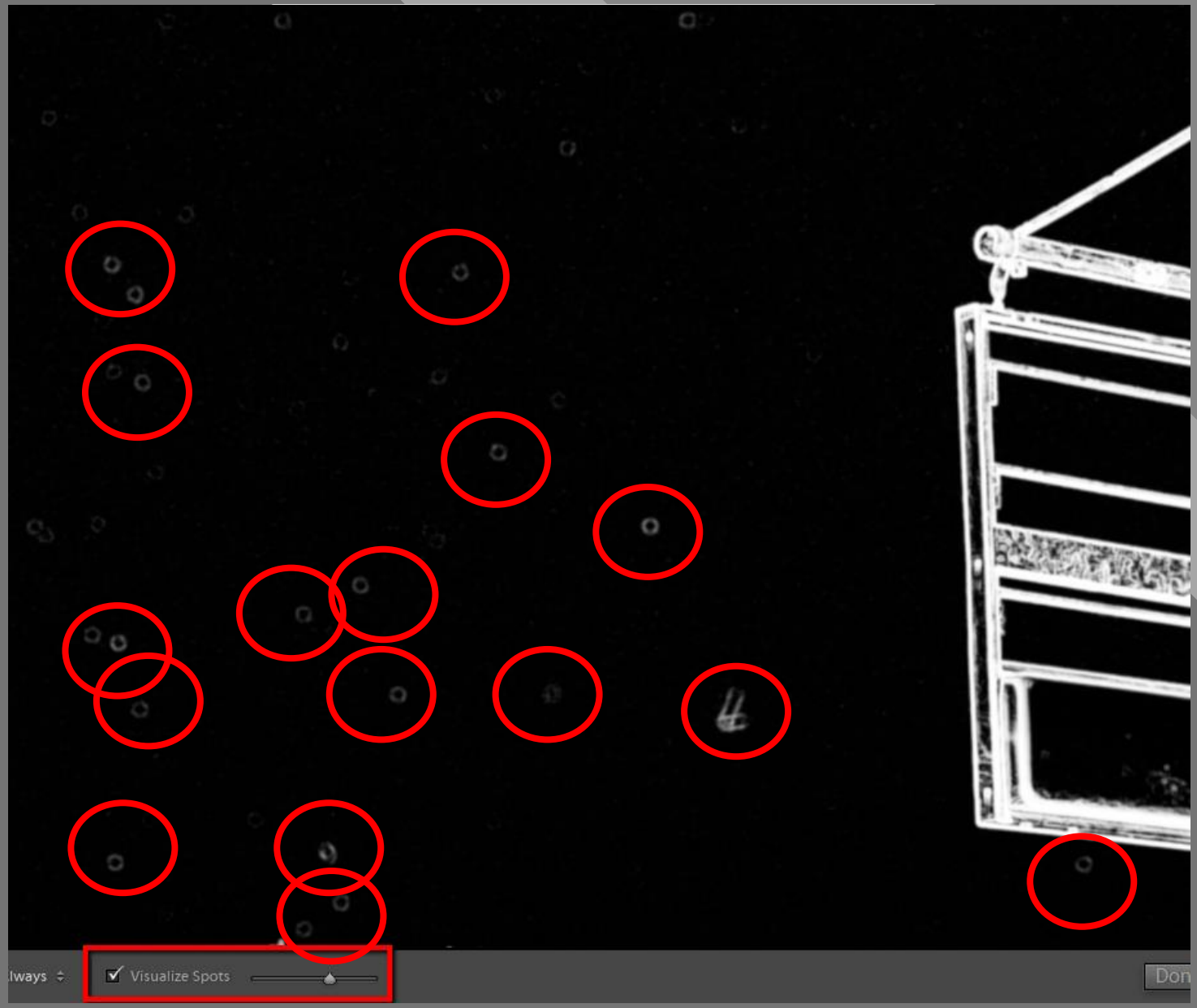


Lightroom

RAW File

Removing Spots and Small Distractions

- Check Visualize Spots and adjust slider to view sensor spots and other distractions

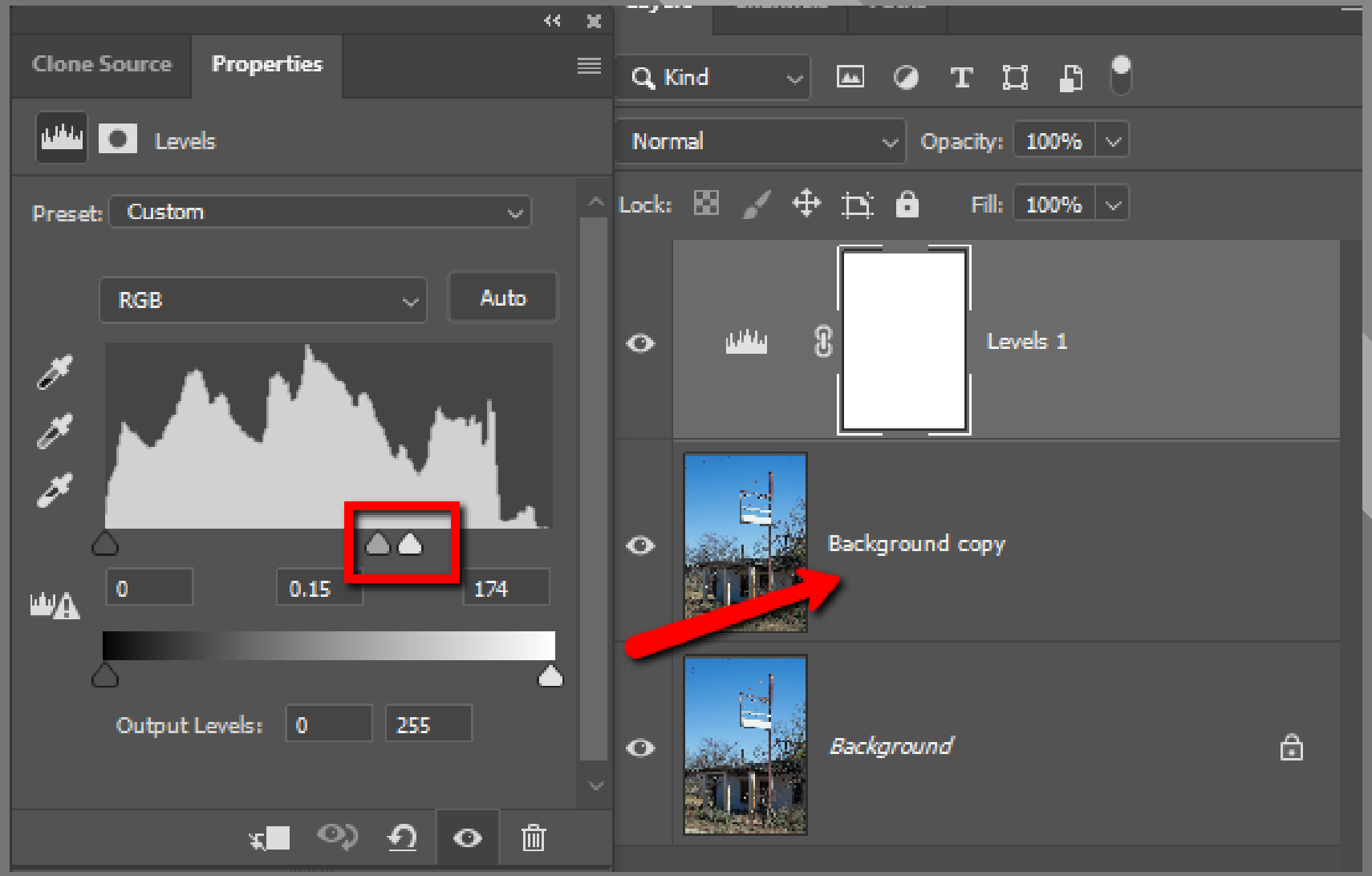


Lightroom

Removing Spots and Small Distractions

- Add Level Adj layer above duplicate Background
- Pull mid-tone and highlight sliders near each other to see spots

Photoshop

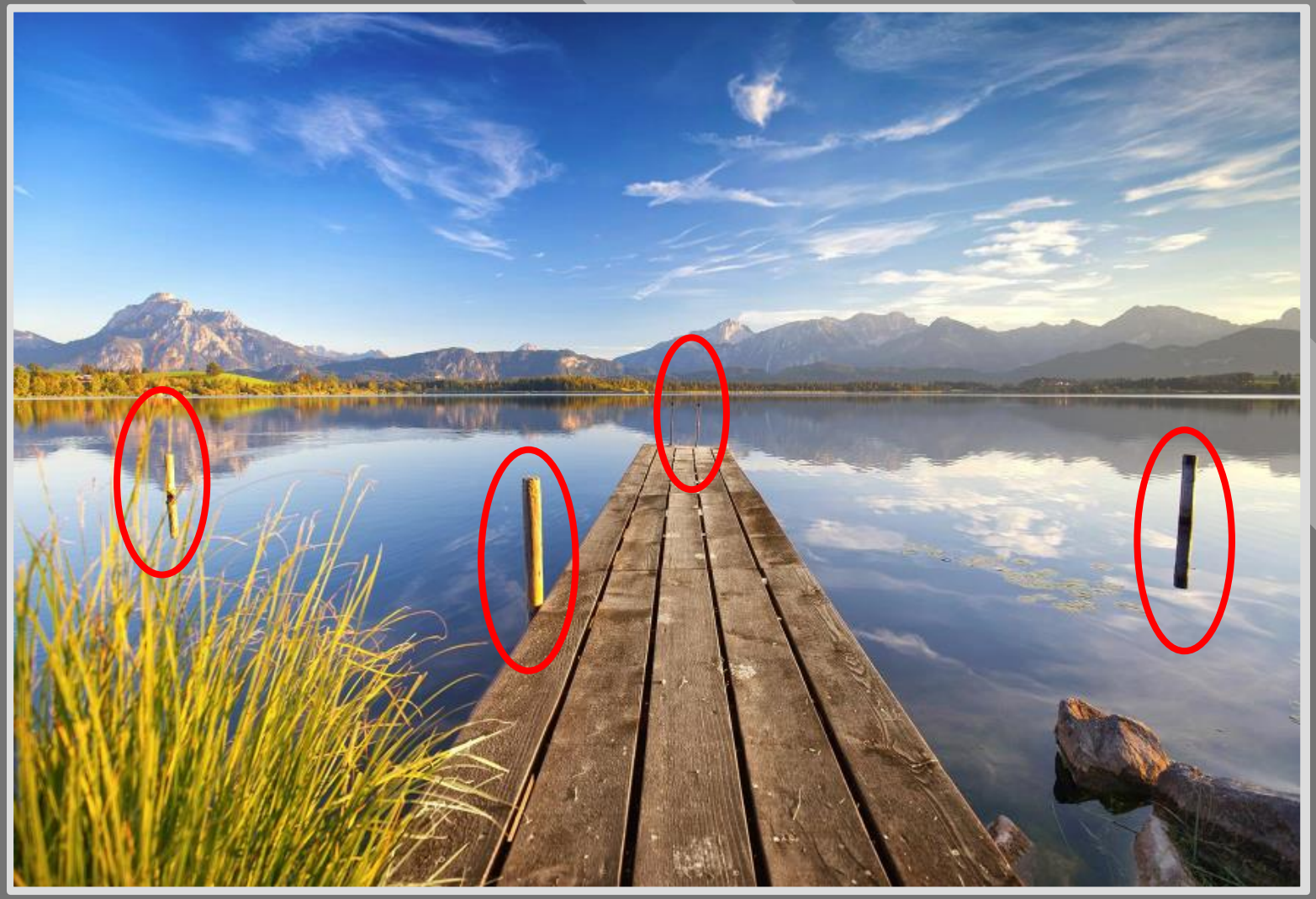


Removing Spots and Small Distractions

- Ignore impact of Levels adj. on other parts of image
- Clone out spots on *pixel* (Bkgnd copy) layer
- Delete Levels layer

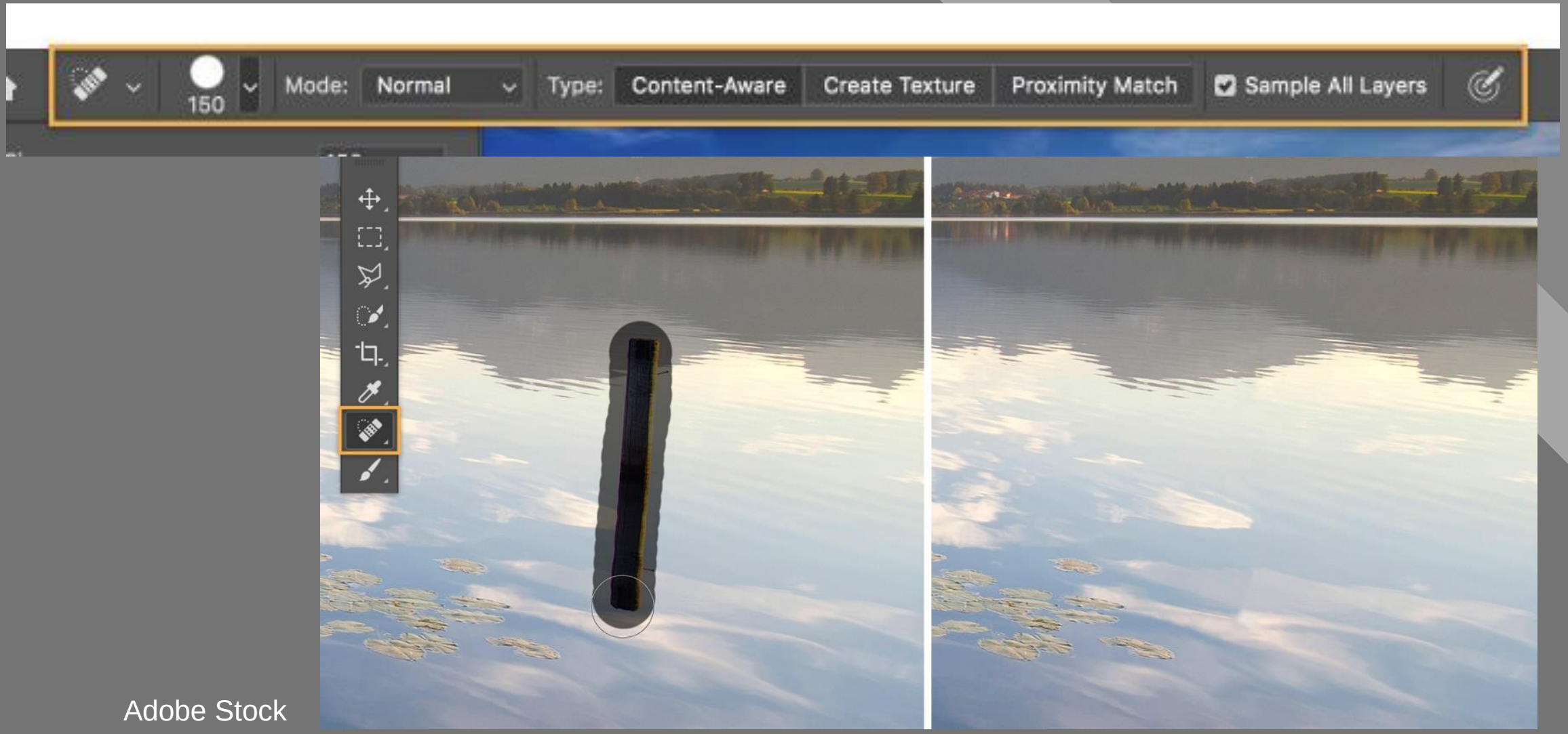
Photoshop

Removing Spots and Small Distractions



Adobe Stock

Removing Spots and Small Distractions



Adobe Stock

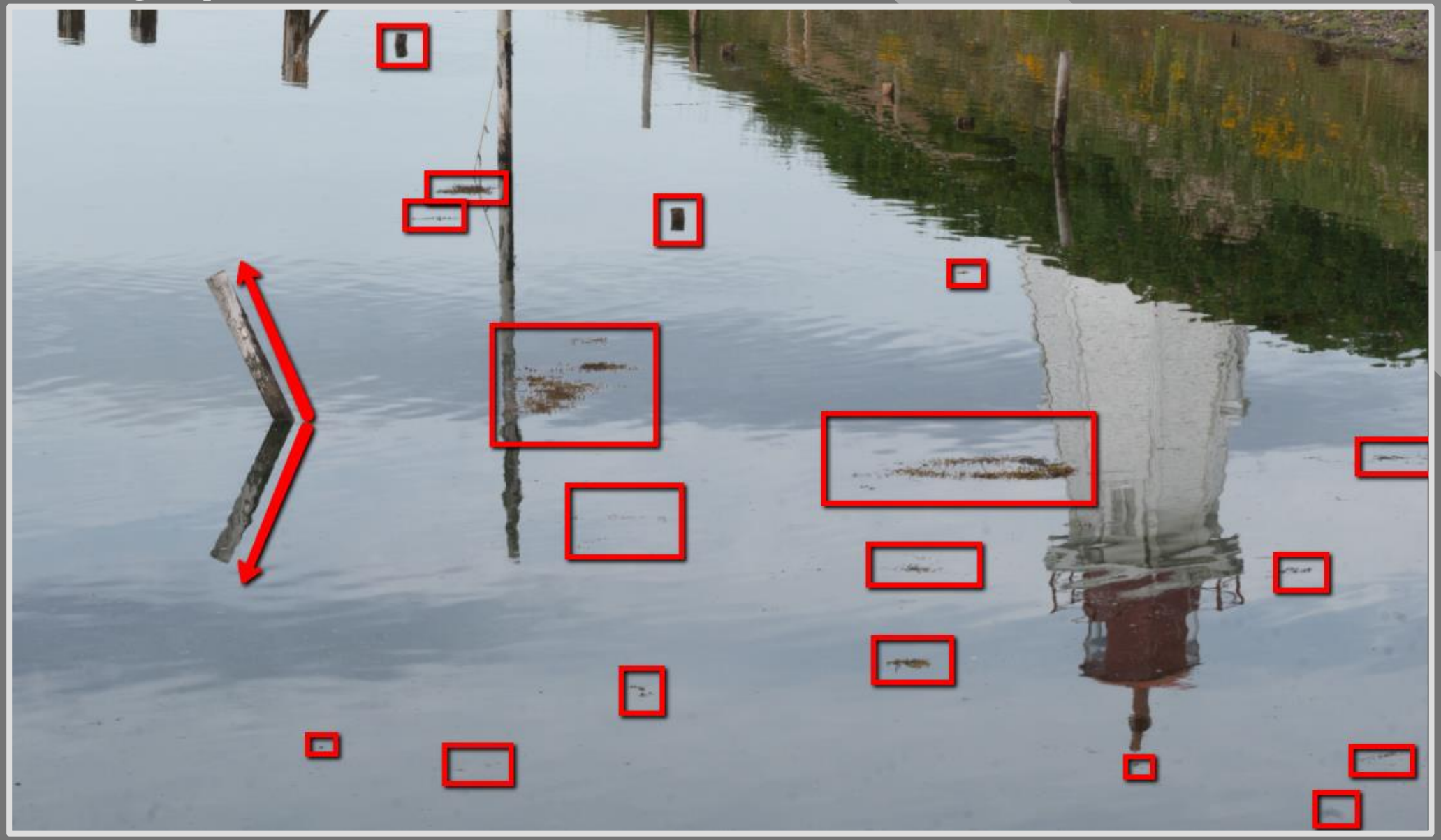
Removing Spots and Small Distractions

Adobe Stock

Removing Spots and Small Distractions

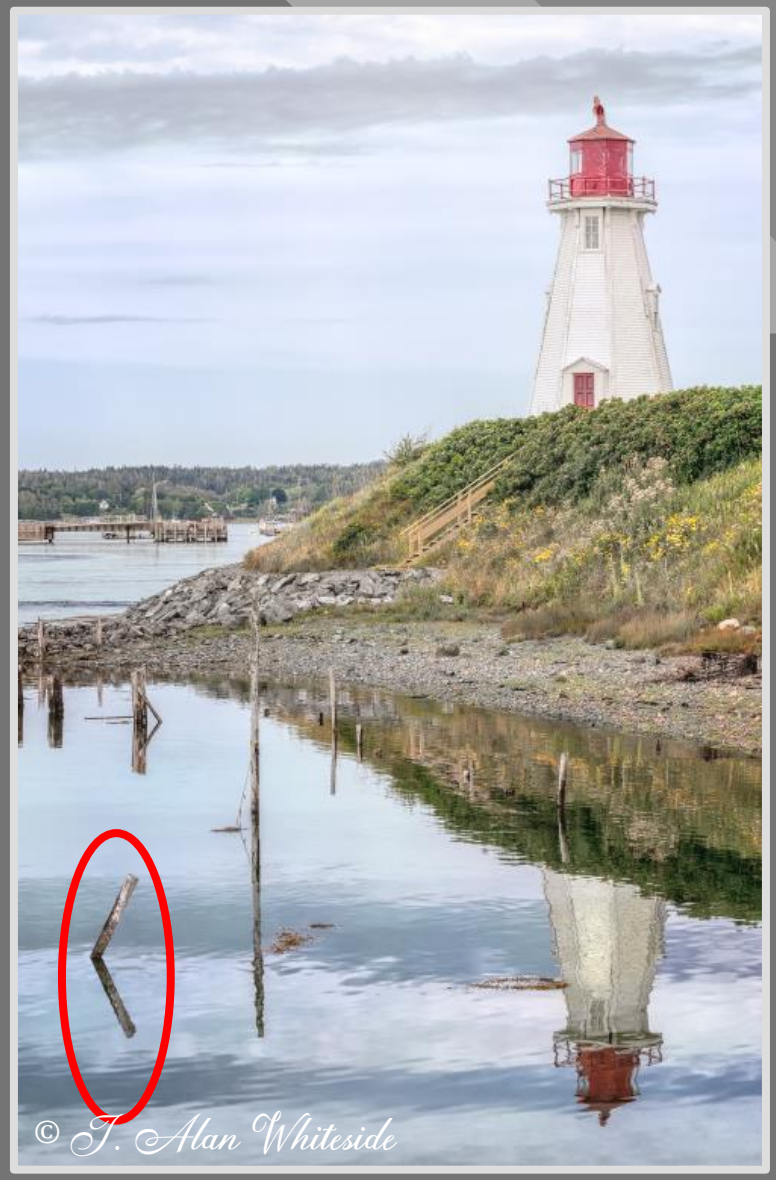
RAW File

Removing Spots and Small Distractions



Removing Spots and Small Distractions

RAW File



Final File

Removing Utility Wires, Etc.

RAW File

Removing Utility Wires, Etc.

Distractions, view 1

Removing Utility Wires, Etc.

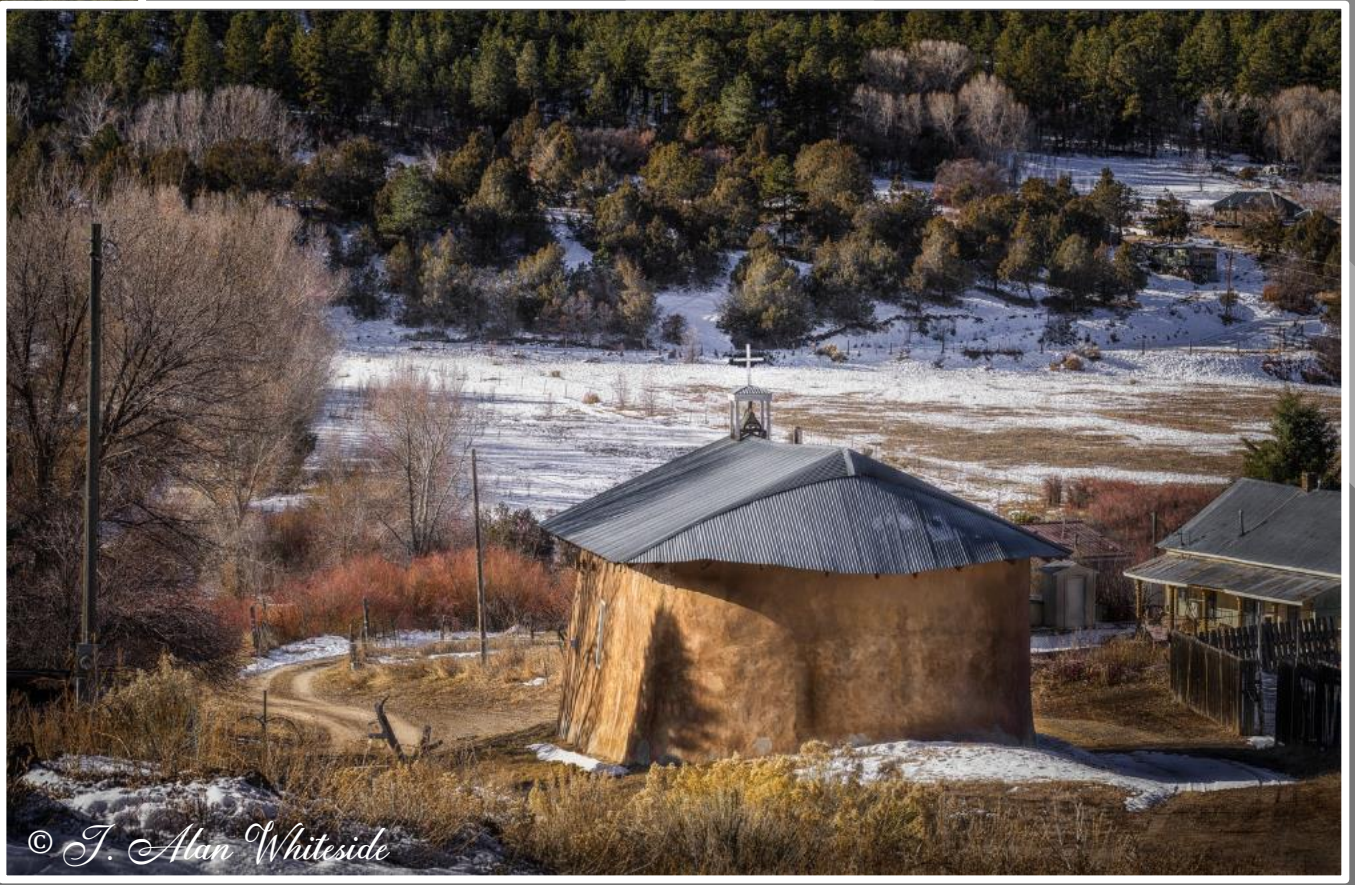
Distractions, view 2

Removing Utility Wires, Etc.

Distractions, view 3

Removing Utility Wires, Etc.

RAW File



Final File

Removing Utility Wires, Etc.

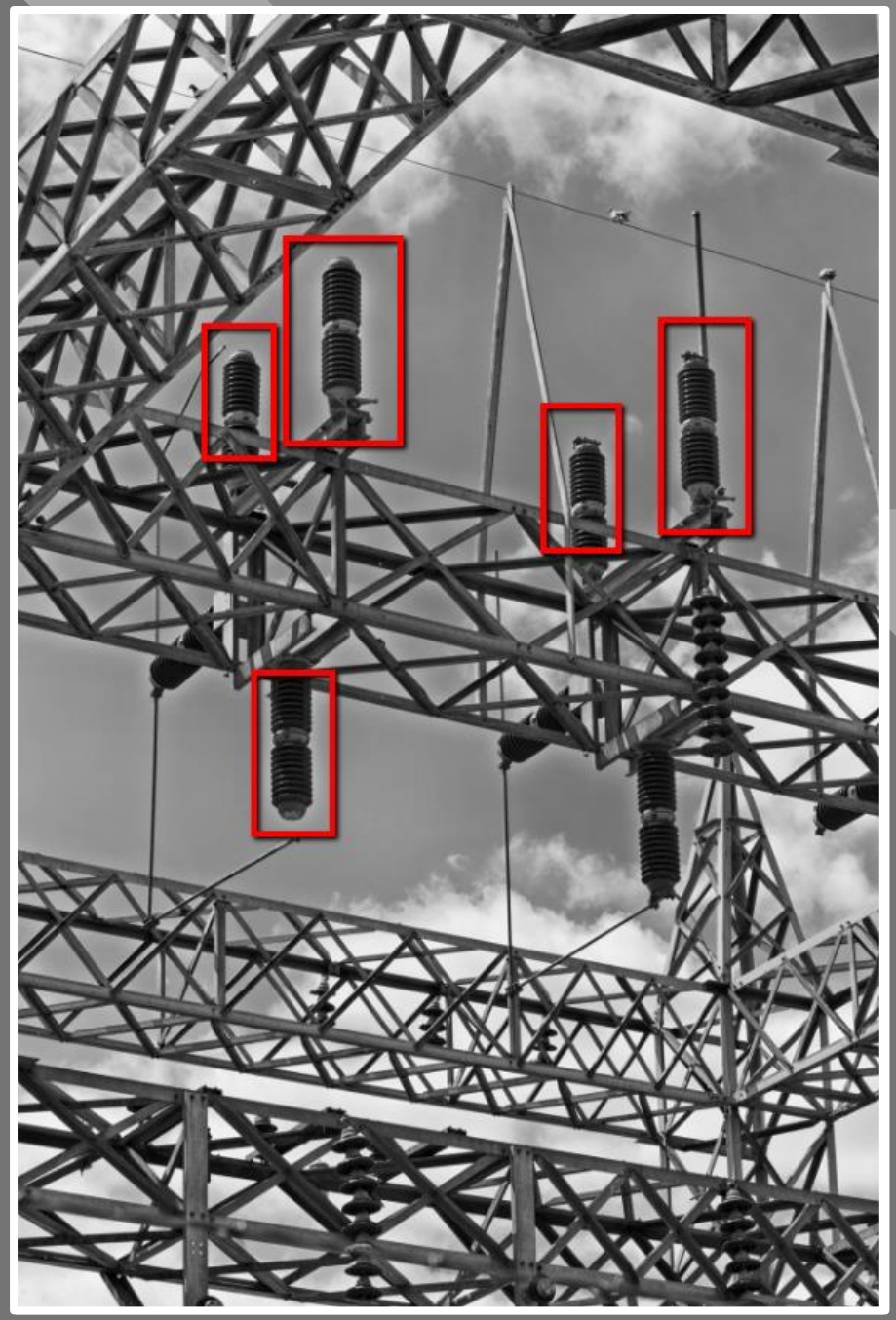
To heal in a straight line:

- Select Spot Healing Tool
- Click at 1st point
- Shift-Click at 2nd point

RAW File detail

Removing Halos

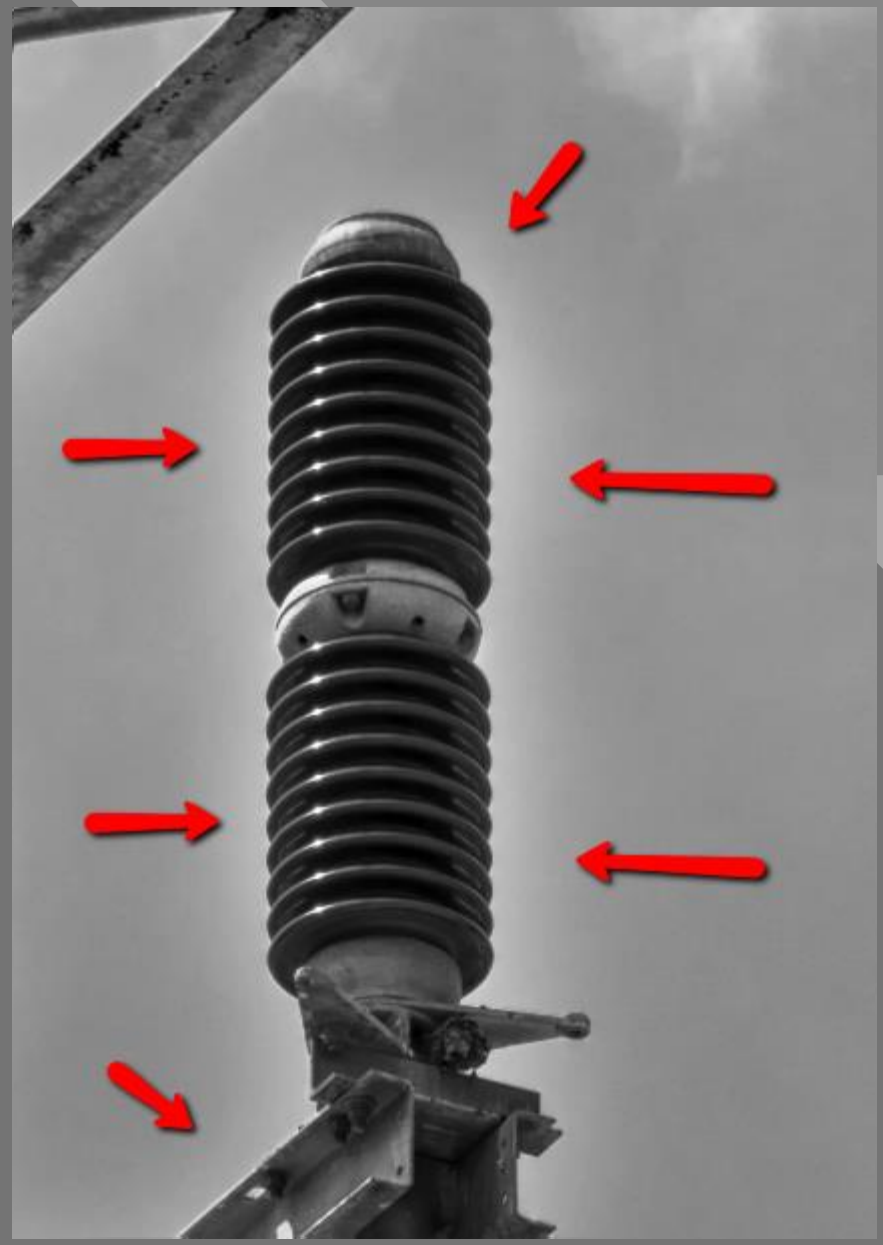
Those nasty light areas around dark objects…



RAW File

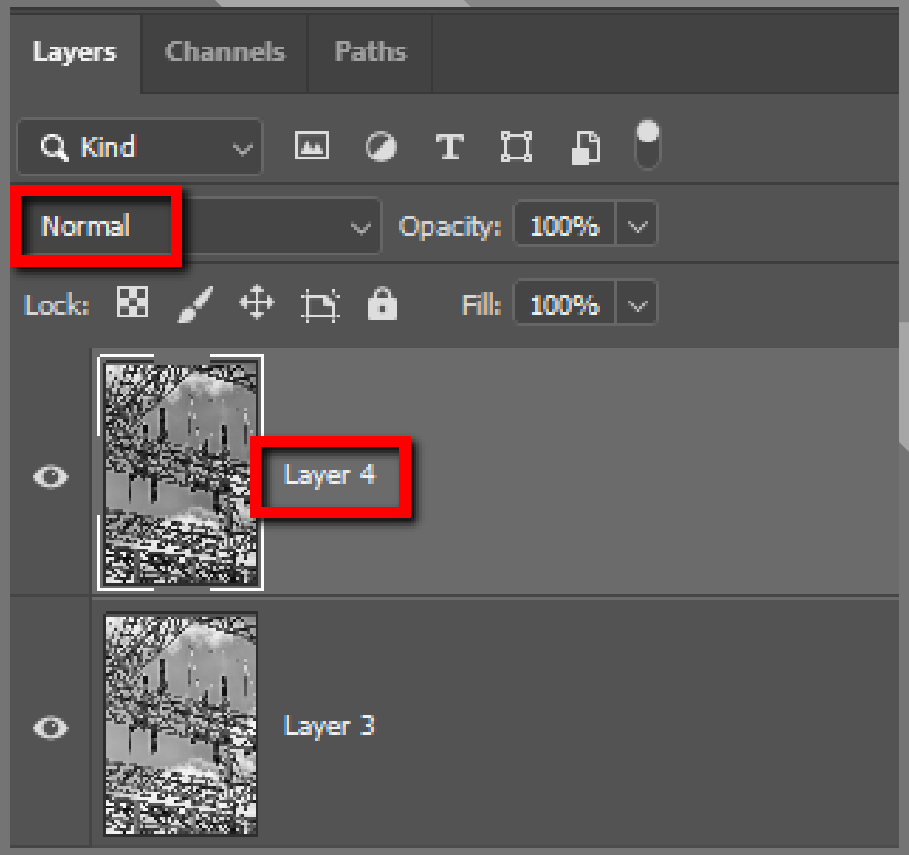
Removing Halos

- Identify haloed areas



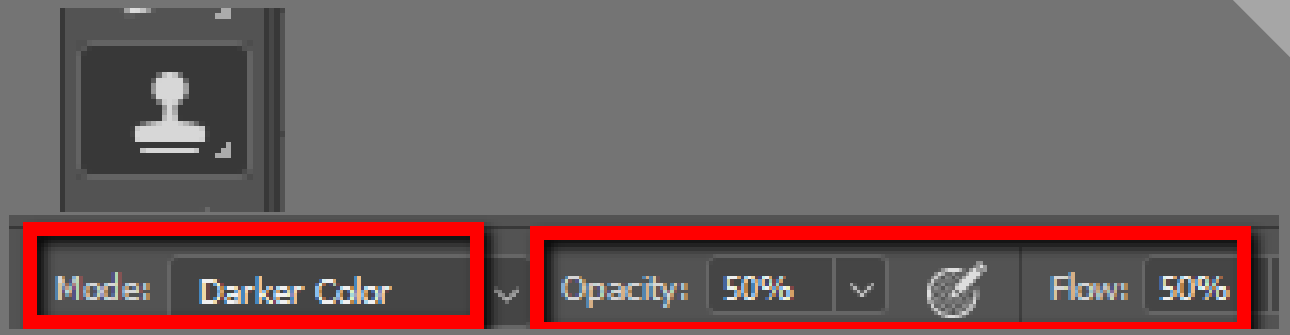
Removing Halos

- Identify haloed areas
- Duplicate layer or Merge Visible



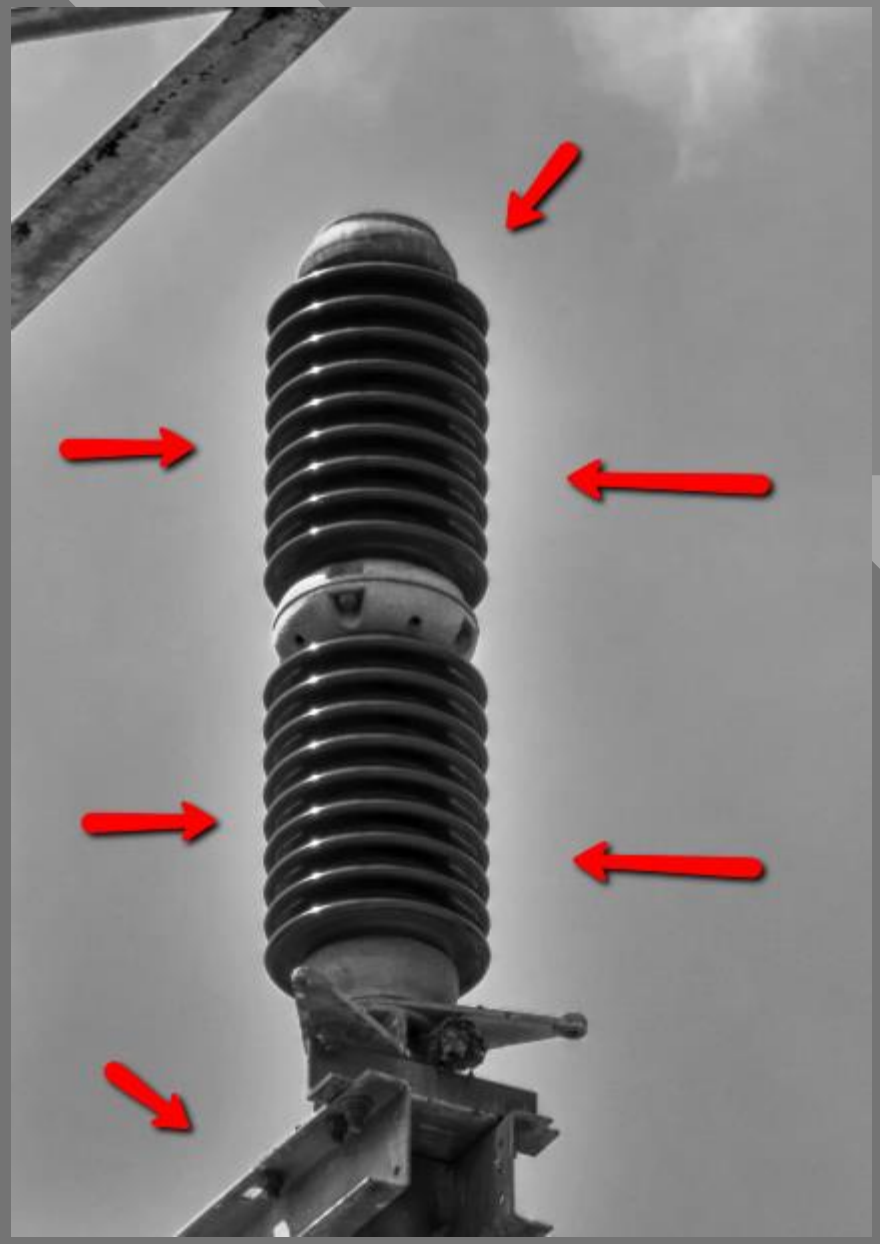
Removing Halos

- Identify haloed areas
- Duplicate layer or Merge Visible
- Select Clone tool, medium opacity and flow, and Darker Color blend mode



Removing Halos

- Identify haloed areas
- Duplicate layer or Merge Visible
- Select Clone tool, medium opacity and flow, and Darker Color blend mode
- Select Clone tool color from nearby color/tone

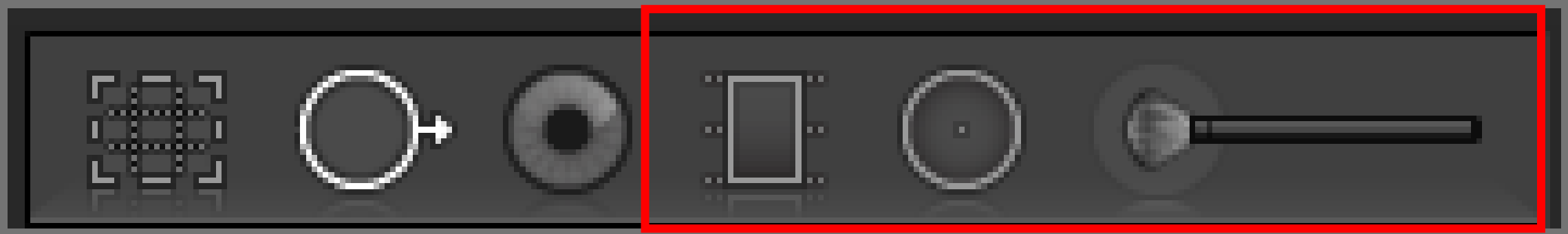


Removing Halos

- Identify haloed areas
- Duplicate layer or Merge Visible
- Select Clone tool, medium opacity and flow, and Darker Color blend mode
- Select Clone tool color from nearby color/tone
- Brush along edge with slight overlap

Distraction Minimizing Strategies

- Lower exposure (brightness)
- Desaturate (but not totally)
- Decrease clarity and texture
- Change hue (color)
- Combination of the above



Tool Summary (not a comprehensive list)

- Cropping (in camera and in post-processing)
- Horizon leveling and perspective control
- Spot healing (small distractions and more major flaws)
- Fixing halos
- Minimize with brush, graduated or radial filter

Optional Participation

- **WHAT TO DO:** Submit 1 **unedited** JPEG photo (**1920 x 1280 – competition size**) that you think contains at least one distracting element
- **BY WHEN:** At least a few days prior to next session, July 21 (the sooner, the better)
- **HOW:** awhiteside2744@tx.rr.com
- **THEN WHAT:** I'll show a few images and discuss minimizing the distractions