

Photo Restoration Guide

By Jonny Davenport



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INTRODUCTION

For years I've made film presets for ON1 based on old film looks to make your digital photos look like they were shot on aged film and papers. In this guide, I'll be doing the opposite and taking an old photograph and restoring it and bring new life back to an old photograph.

How many of us have boxes of old photographs that have seen better days? Most likely these include heirloom pieces of our family history going back several generations if we are lucky enough to have had these images passed down through our families.

My most treasured possessions are photographs. And some of those photographs have seen better days. In this guide I'll be going over steps and techniques to bring old photographs back to life using the latest ON1 PHOTO RAW 2020.

This guide is meant to be a quick overview of tools and techniques for easily restoring photographs that may have fading, spots, rips surface flaws that have occurred through the years.

In this guide, I will be retouching a photograph of my late grandmother who passed away a few months before I was born. This photograph was given to me by one of my cousins who thought this particular photograph should be with me because of my lifelong passion for photography.

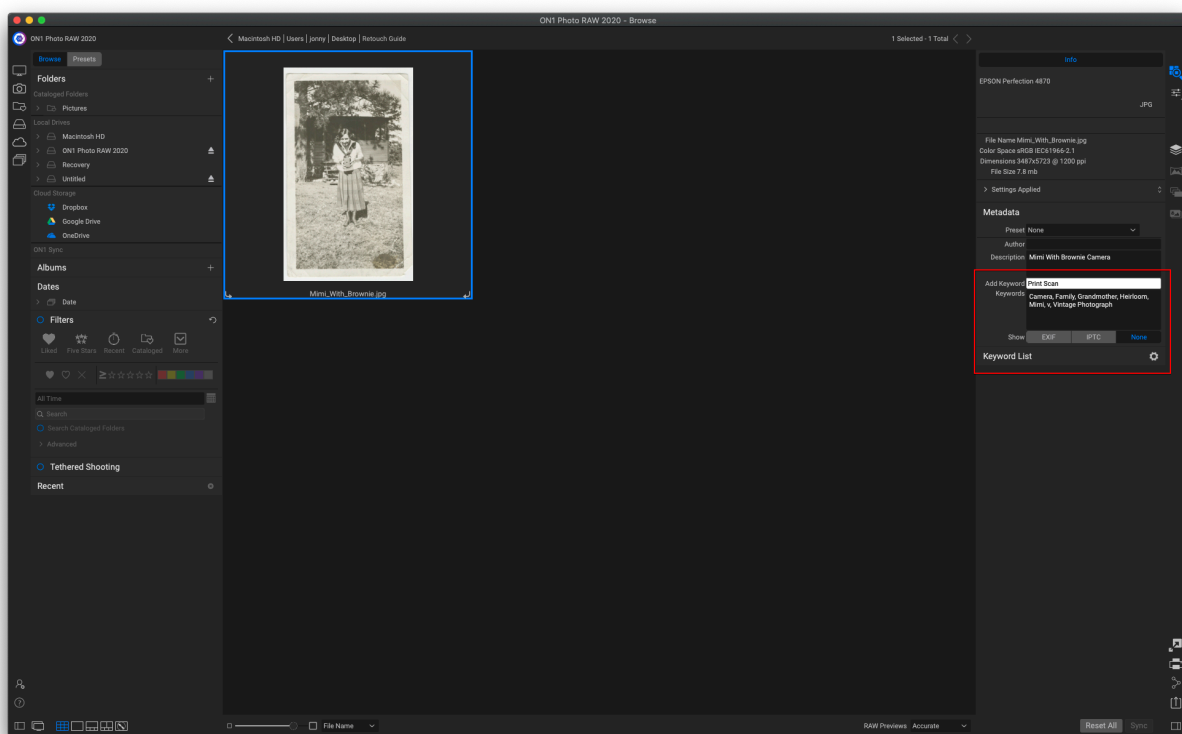
OLD TO NEW

I scanned this image with an older Epson flatbed scanner I have. Nowadays, you can use a variety of different ways to get your old photographs digitized. From scanners, to digital cameras to your phones, we now have a variety of tools to capture everything from old slides and negatives to prints. The techniques covered in this guide can be used regardless of how you've digitized your old photographs.

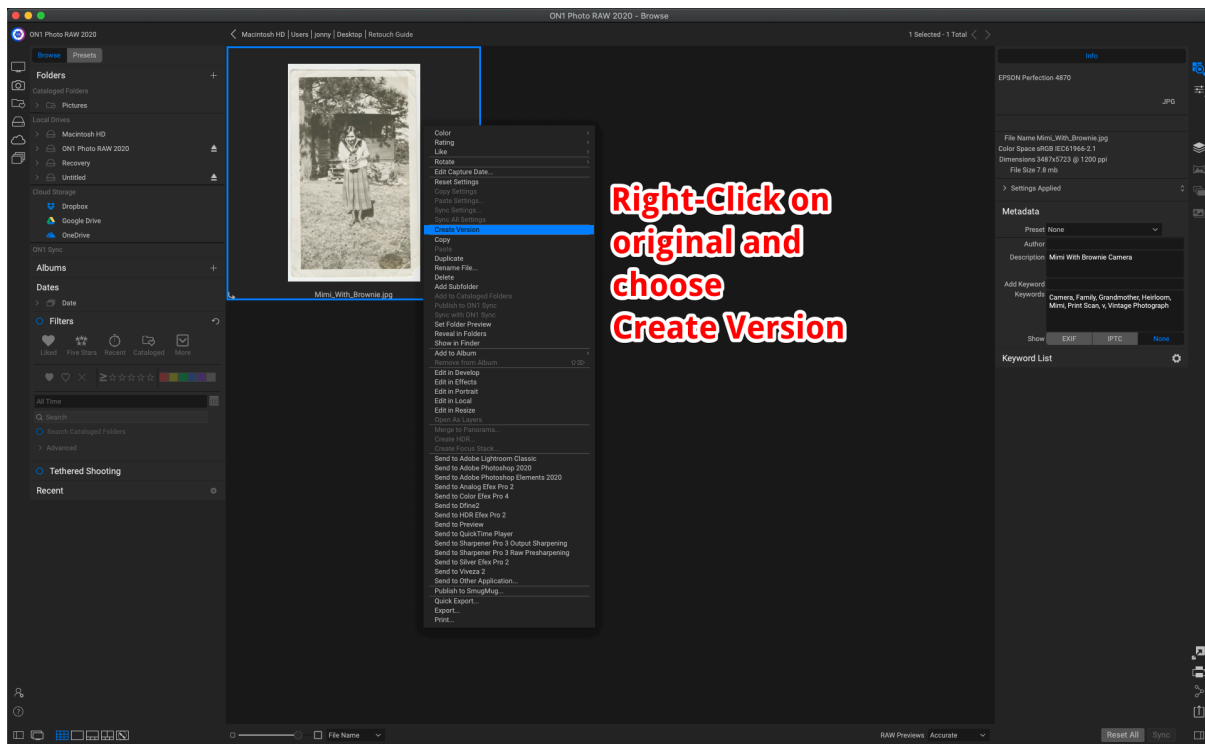
I am a proponent of using what you have available. If you don't have a scanner, use your digital camera. If you don't have a digital camera, use your phone. You'd be surprised at what you can get away with the advancements in technology.

In Browse, I've selected my scanned image and am now ready to start my editing. But before I do so, I like to add a few simple keywords at the beginning of any editing to my images so that if later on down the line I want to find this image, I can search using keywords with my cataloged folders.

Here I've added some basic keywords in the Metadata pane:



Next, rather than working on the original image file itself I like to create and edit on a Version. It's basically a virtual identical copy of the original file itself and I can more easily compare before and after edits along the way.



- * Note you do not need to create a version, this is just my preferred editing steps, without working on the original file itself.
- * Also if you add any layers while you are editing, when you return to Browse a brand new photo will be created (a .onphoto file), this would be created alongside both the original file and any version.
- * The .onphoto file only gets created when you add any Layers.

SIT BACK AND LOOK

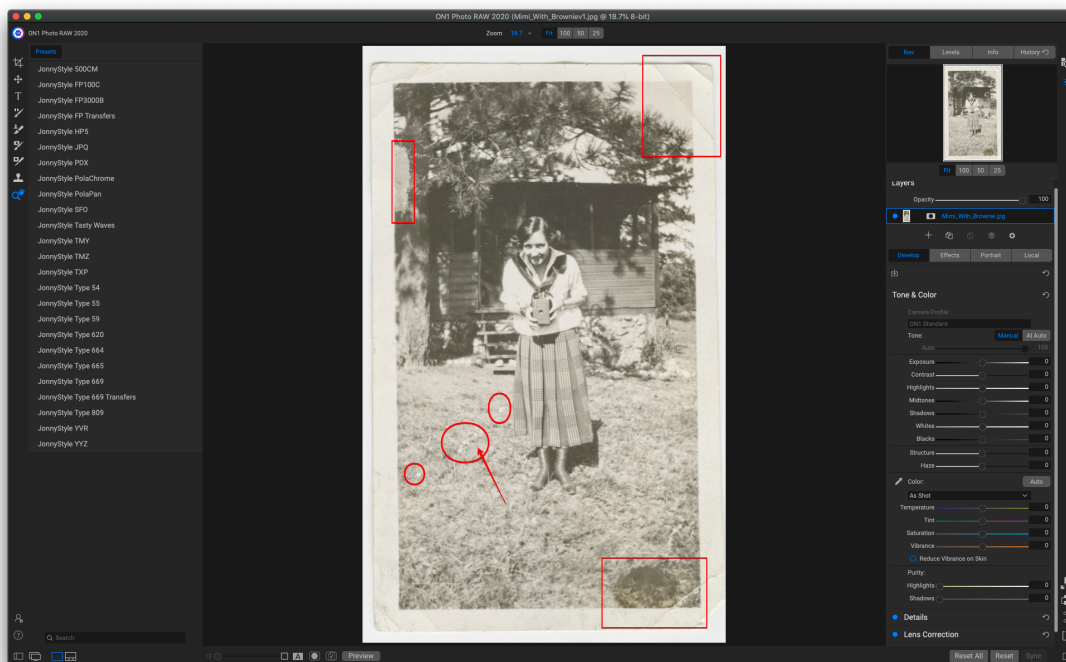
Before I start spending any time doing heavy editing, I like to first assess the image and identify what work needs to be done and what my objective is for the image itself. And how can I best achieve my intended objective, while minimizing my editing time. I know some of you like to spend lots of time editing your photos for long periods of time, but for myself, I would prefer to make edits as quick as possible and don't want to spend hours editing if I don't have to.

So for this image I ask myself what is important? Is the original border necessary? What parts of the area need the most retouching? Do I really need to spot the entire image? How can I best maximize my time? Could the image be cropped from the original for better composition (possibly minimizing the retouch work)?

I'll then select the version and open it up into the Edit modules to begin editing. But before I jump into editing the image, I'll take a moment to assess what the image currently looks like, where are the problem areas, what can be improved, what can be discarded. Doing this before hand can really save you lots of time if you have the ability to improve on the given image.

Identify What's Important

Here I've identified the problematic areas:



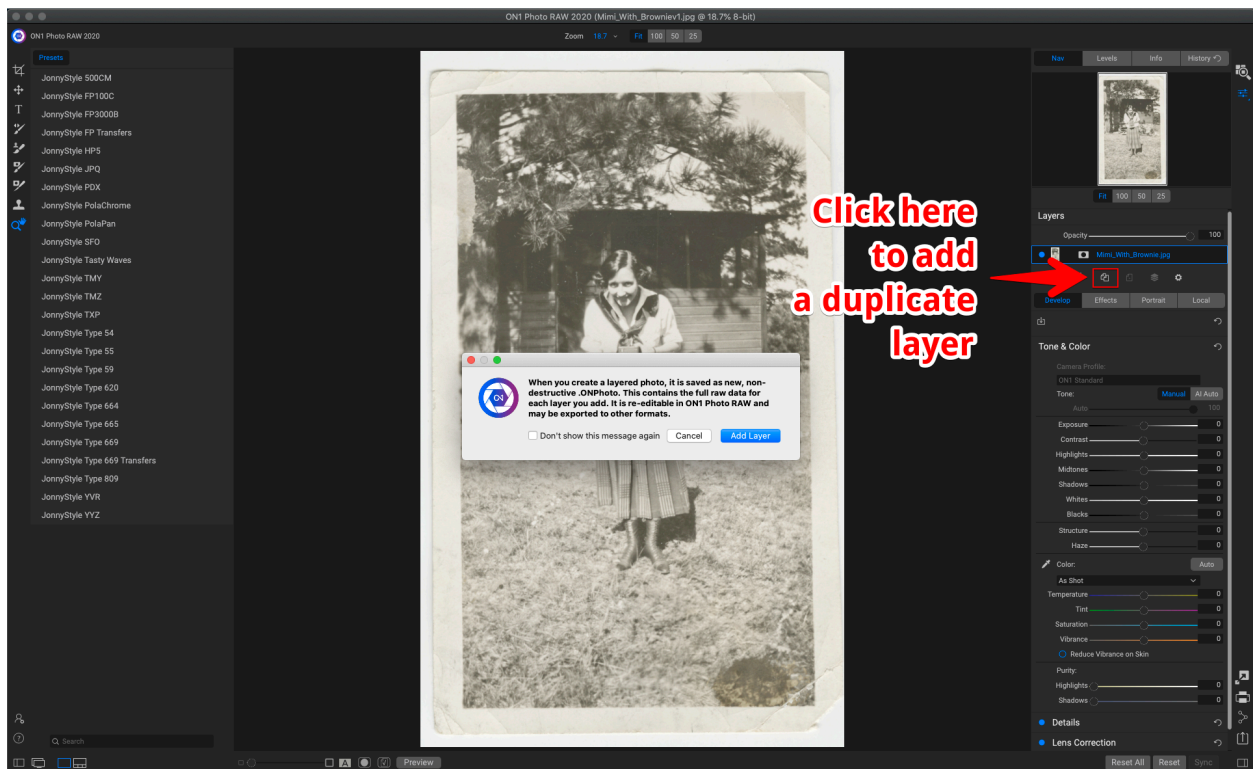
And when you zoom in on the image, you really begin to see all the surface flaws. Yikes! So much retouching!!

As I assess all this I ask myself, what is the most important part of the image. Is it the corners of the image? The background? No, it's the subject matter. My grandmother and her camera. That is the area I should spend the most amount of time trying to clean up.

DUPLICATE!

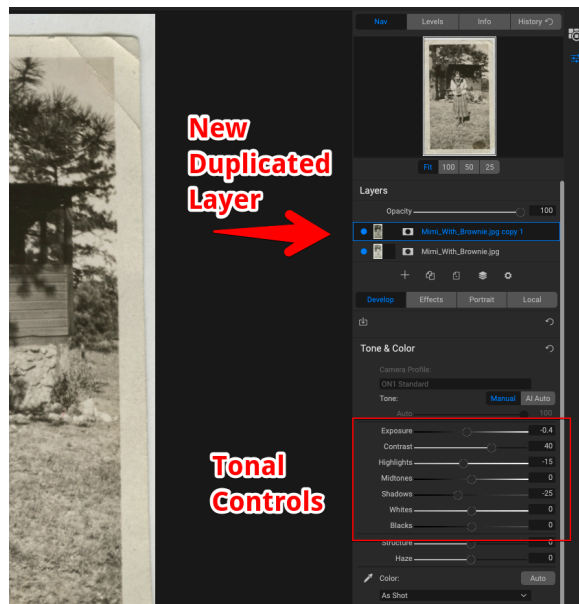
I always find it good practice to duplicate the image layer I'm going to work on when doing any heavy retouching. It's a great way to easily compare the editing done with how the original image layer looks as you get into heavy editing.

After duplicating the layer, I'm now ready to begin my editing.



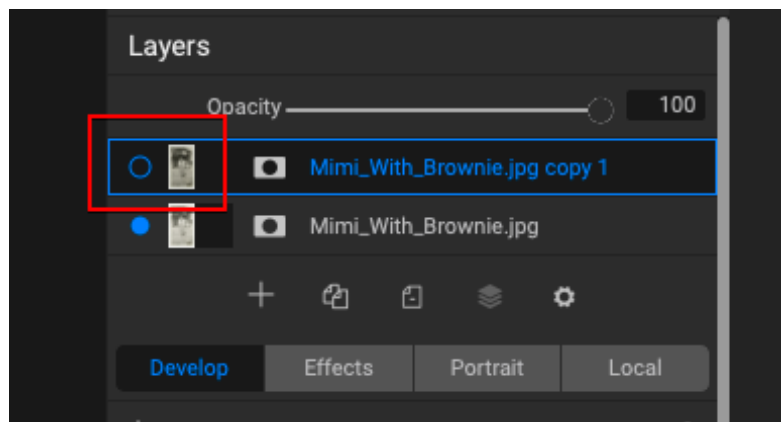
First I'll start with making basic tonal adjustments to add contrast and bring a little more snap into this older faded photograph.

I've adjusted the Exposure, to slightly darken the image. Then I adjust the Contrast Slider to darken up darker areas giving the image some extra pop.



I will also bring down the highlights just a bit and adjust the Shadow slider down to even further darken up the shadows.

Please keep in mind all these adjustments are subjective. There is no right or wrong to making these adjustments. Adjust them to your liking.



Take a quick look at just the few adjustments made by clicking the radio button next to the duplicated layer to turn on and off the layer visibility and compare it to the original underlying layer.

LET THE FUN BEGIN

Now I'm going to start retouching use the Retouch Tools to spot and start cleaning up the defects in the photograph.

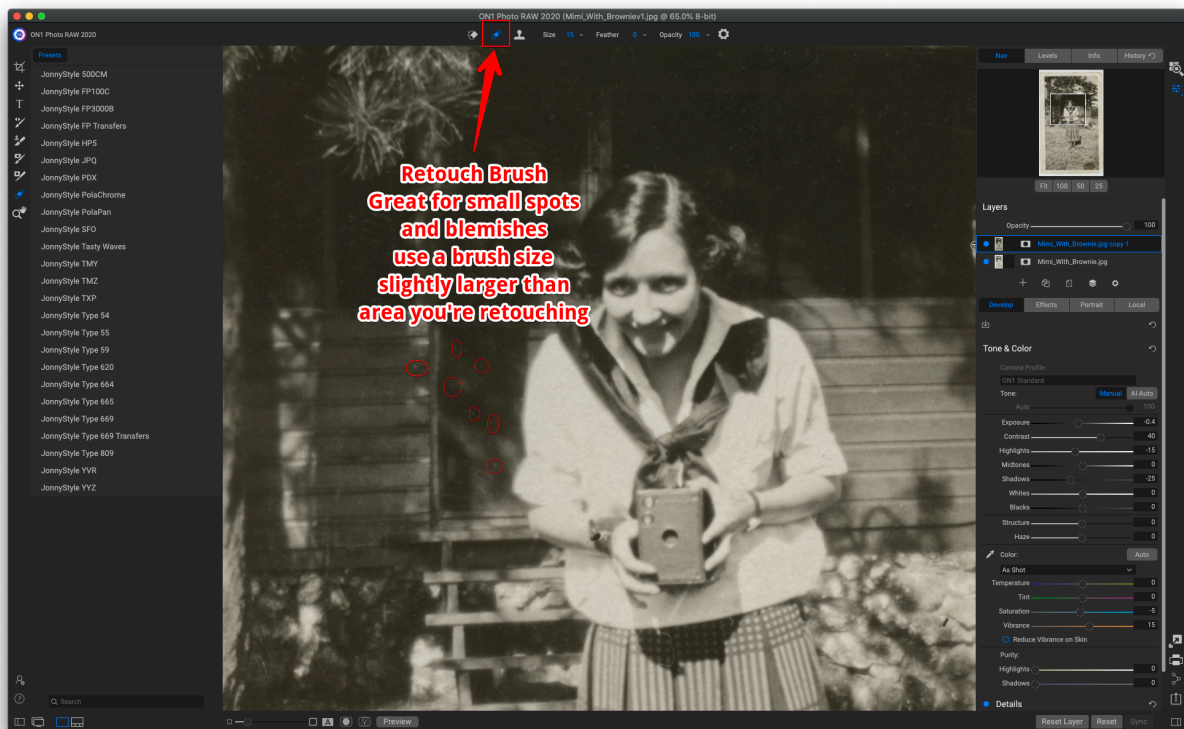
The first tool I'm going to use is the Retouch Brush to do most of my spot removal on the image. I'll adjust the brush size to use a smaller brush, typically just slightly bigger than the areas of dust that I am removing. This helps improve speed and uses a smaller sampling area of color and texture.



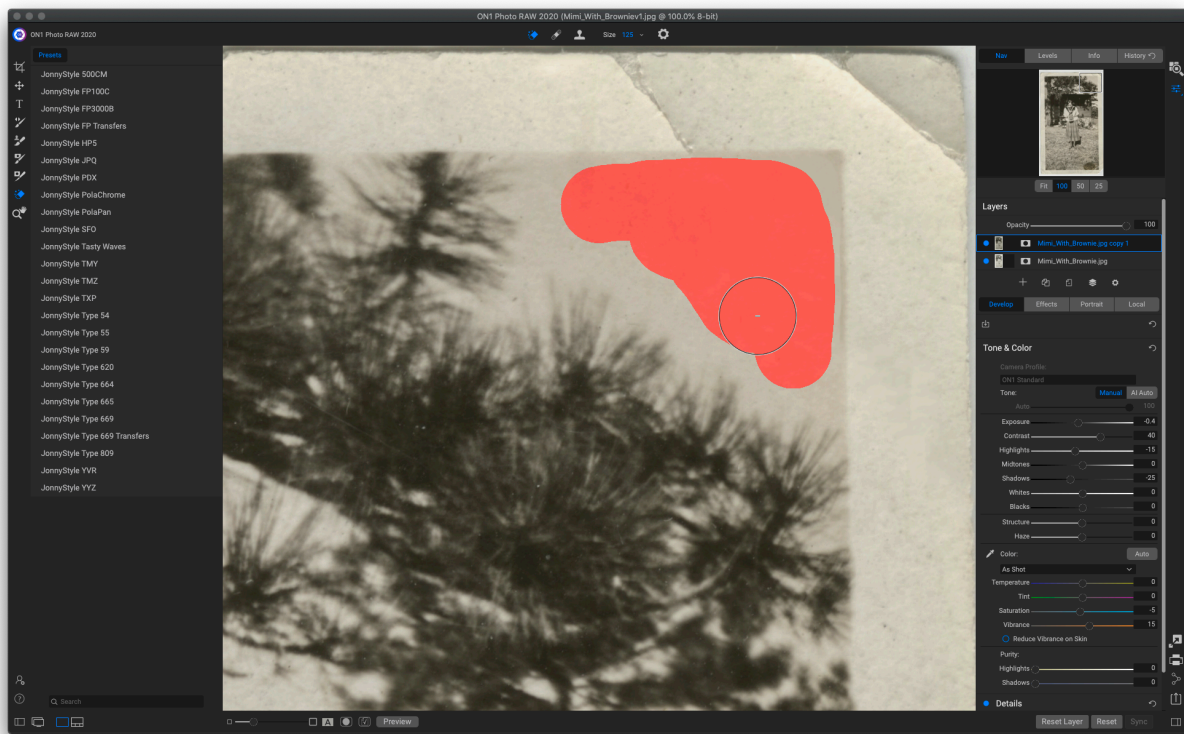
Next after using the Retouch Brush, I'll use the Perfect Eraser. I'll use this to paint over larger blemish areas like scratches on the print to use its content-aware algorithm to fill in and replace these larger image flaws.



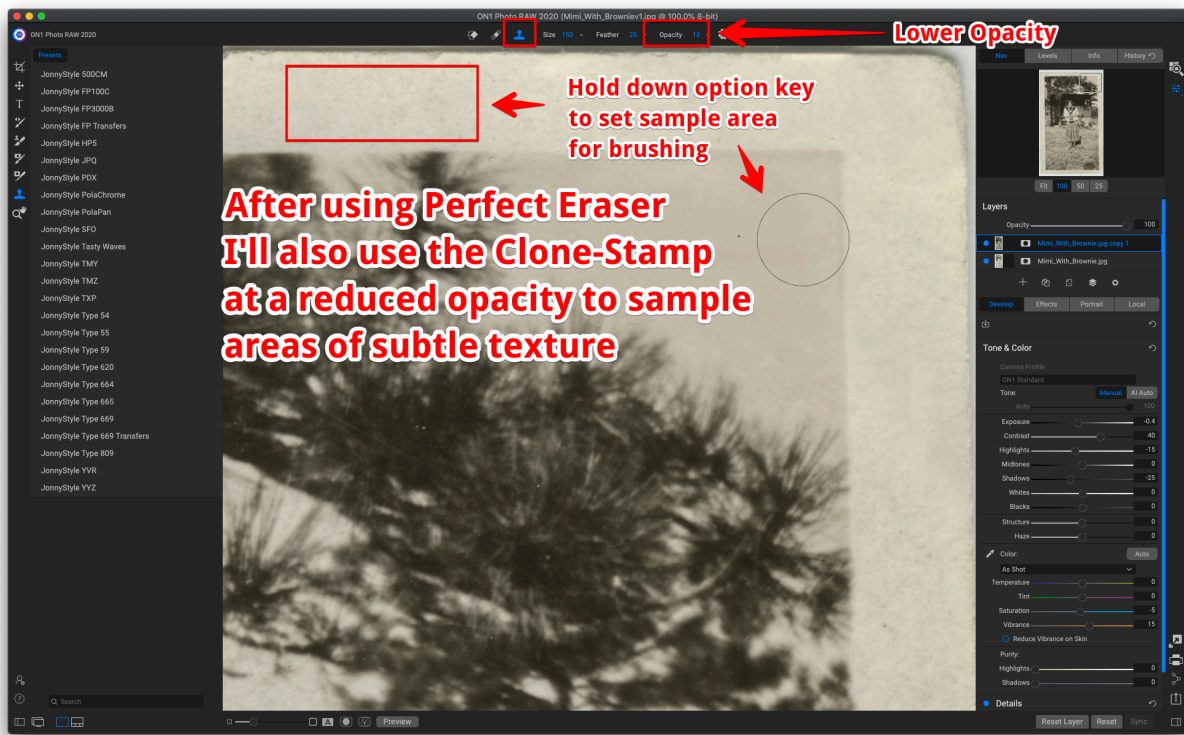
(The Perfect Eraser in Action)



(The Retouch Brush great for spots)



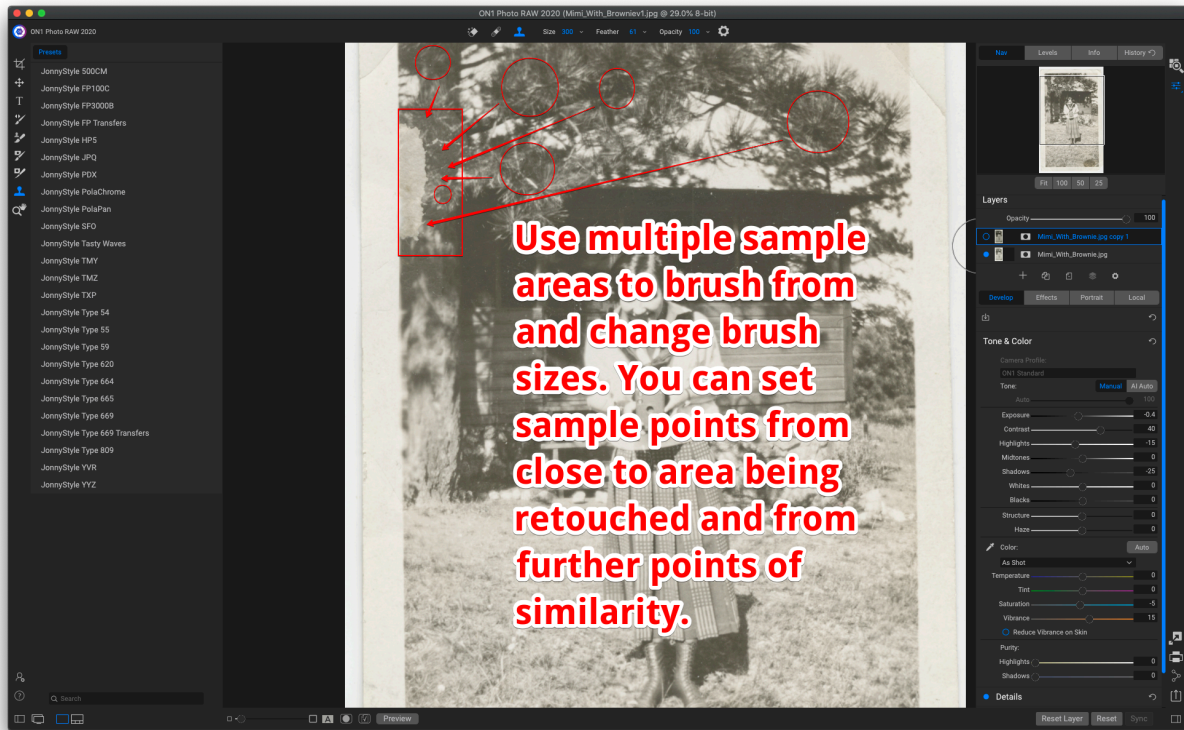
Note: It can take a few attempts to brush over the area to get desired results.



The Clone-Stamp tool also works great for areas that are similar textures or areas of commonality. You can set varying sample points by changing where the brush pulls this information from. (Hold down the Alt/Option key to set the sample area)

This is a great way to remove distractions or flaws from the image. By changing and setting multiple sample spots while you brush you can make the area look less cloned and more realistic, blending more natural with the surrounding areas. Lowering opacity also allows for subtle texture to be added as well.





(Use multiple sample points when using Clone Stamp)

BEFORE

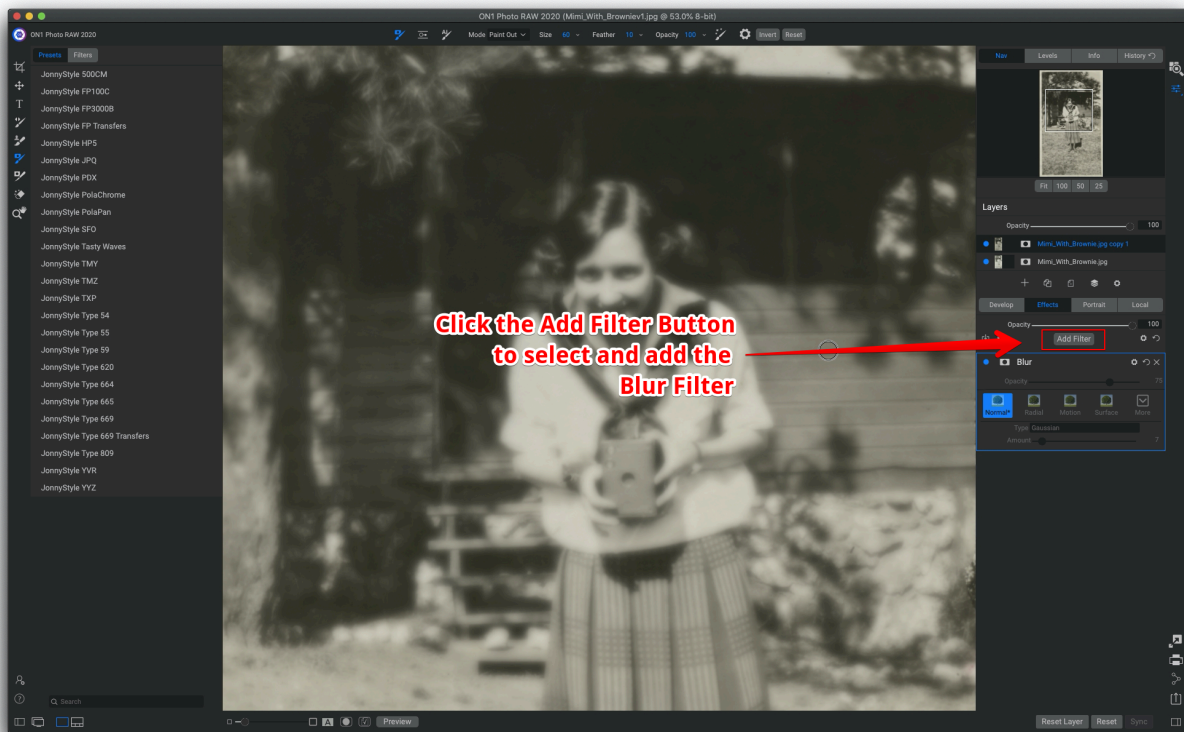


AFTER



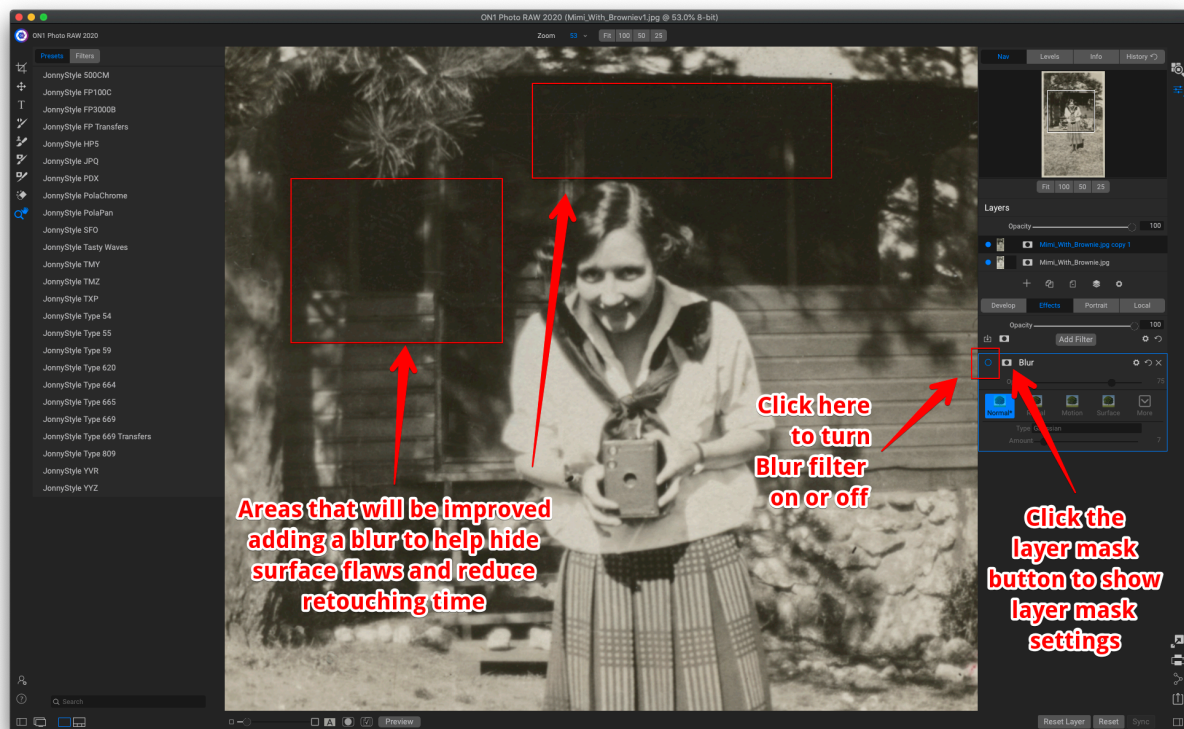
After doing a majority of the retouching I'm not going to go into Effects and add finishing touches to further improve and refine the image.

In this example rather than spend large amounts of time spotting and retouching I am going to use some different filters to help clean up and refine the image with a few simple filters.



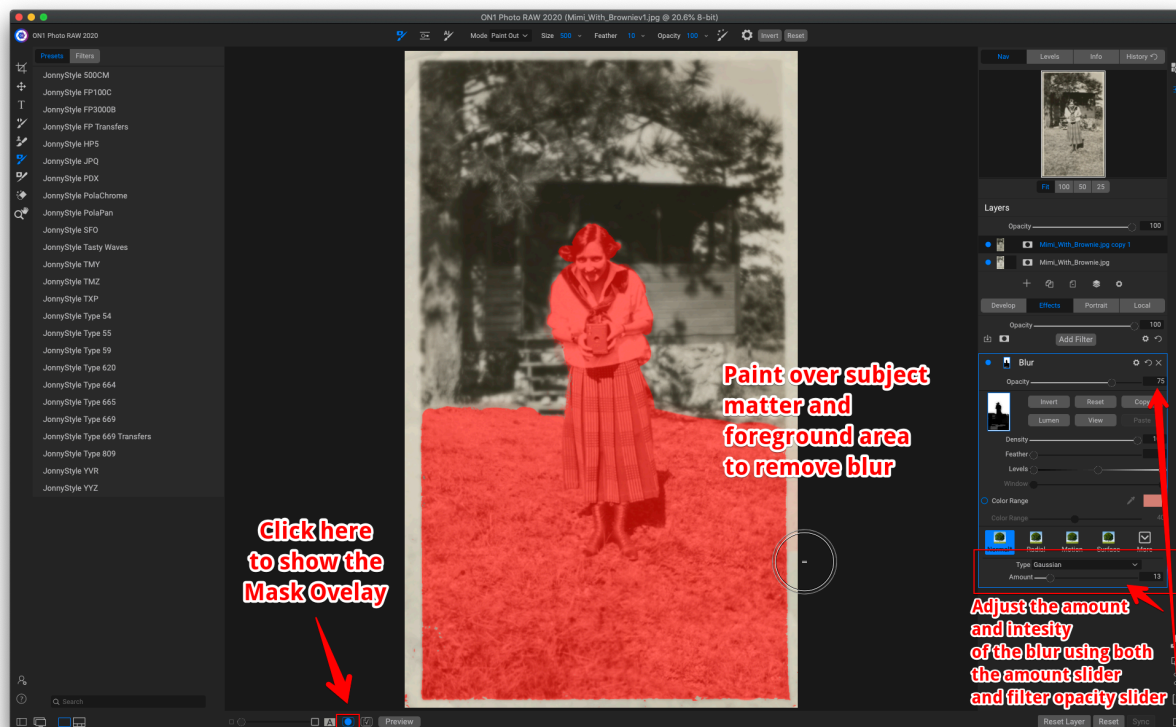
First, I still have some dust and scratches that are noticeable on the print that I can easily eliminate using a blur. This does two things: help hide some of these surface flaws without spending lots of time dust spotting and also creates a slight background blur that draws more focus to the subject matter.

Here I'll click on the Filters pane and add the Blur filter.

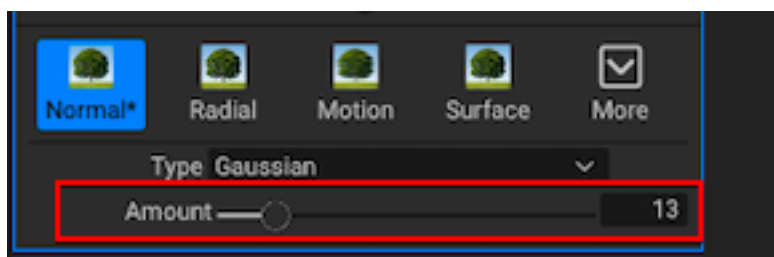
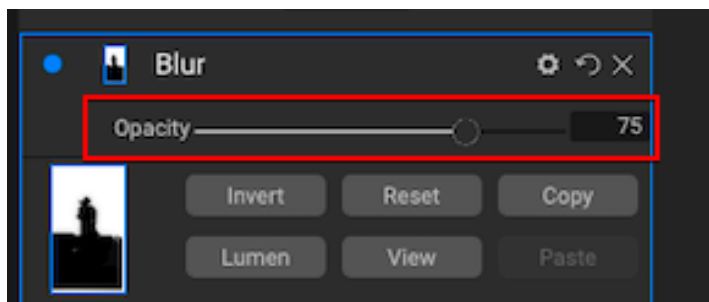


Next I will click on the layer mask thumbnail to then paint out blur from the subject matter where I do not want any blur applied. By clicking on the layer mask thumbnail in the blur filter, the masking brush will automatically be selected and I can then easily paint over the subject to remove the blur

(MASK OVERLAY PREVIEW)



When the Blur Filter is added, it is way more blur to the image than what I want. I will adjust the Amount slider to greatly reduce the overall blur affect and also adjust the Opacity slider of the Blur filter itself to create a more natural and realistic blur to subtly hide any surface flaws and also bring more focus to the subject matter.



Experiment with varying levels of blur or even blur types. You can create amazing depth of field using either the Blur filter or Lens Blur filter to achieve this.

BEFORE



AFTER



After adding the Blur, I'm now going to add a B&W filter and apply a Toner. The original here looks a bit a big greenish for my liking, so I'm going to add the B&W filter and choose one of the many Toner effects we have that recreate the old classic darkroom techniques of yesteryear.

I loved experimenting with various teas and coffees to stain and tone prints. Now with our filter you can easily apply a variety of creative toners to your B&W Images.



Coming to the end of my photo restoration there are two more steps I'm going to take in Effects to really refine the image.

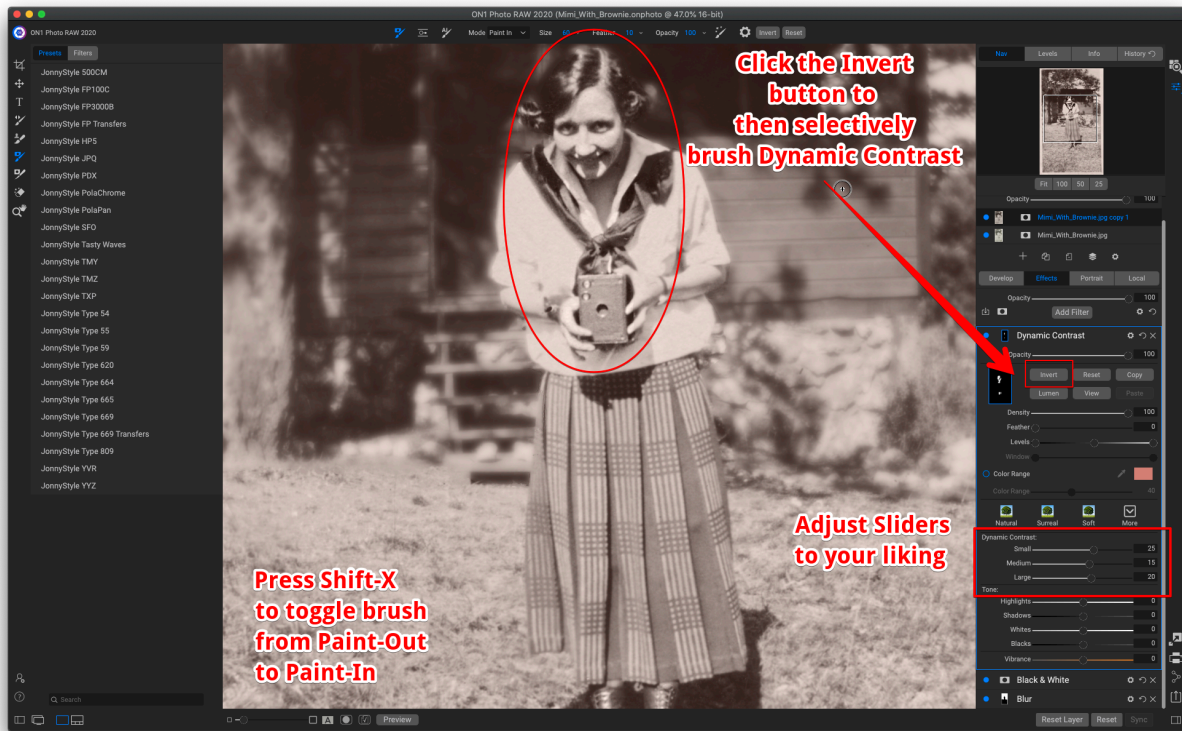
First I'm going to add the Dynamic Contrast filter and selective apply the Filter to only the subject, giving a little extra snap and pop.

I'm only waiting over the face and hair and the camera, to give just a little extra pop to the subject.

I'll then adjust the Small, Medium and Large sliders to my liking. These adjusts the contrast in areas of small, medium and large detail.

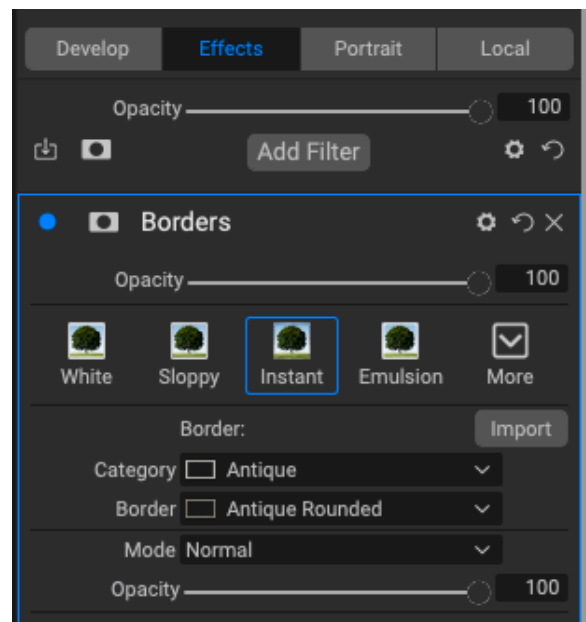
By adjusting these, I get just a little extra pop in my grandmother's face drawing your attention more to her eyes and camera.





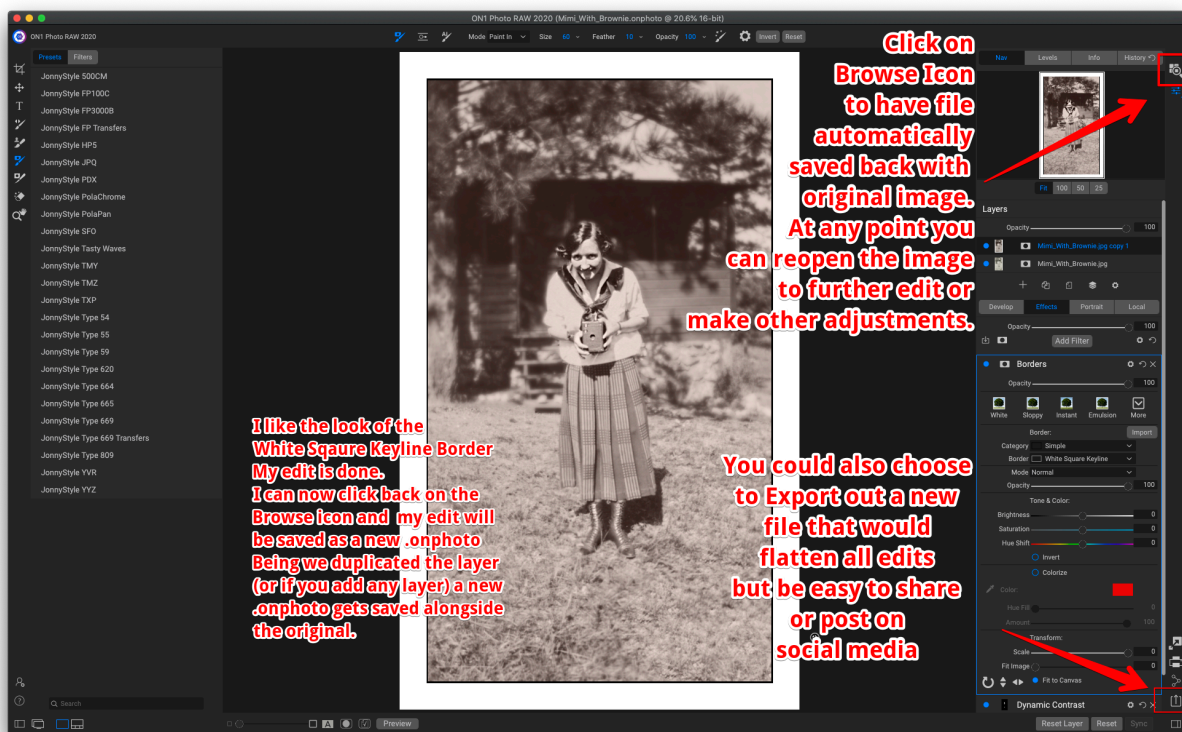
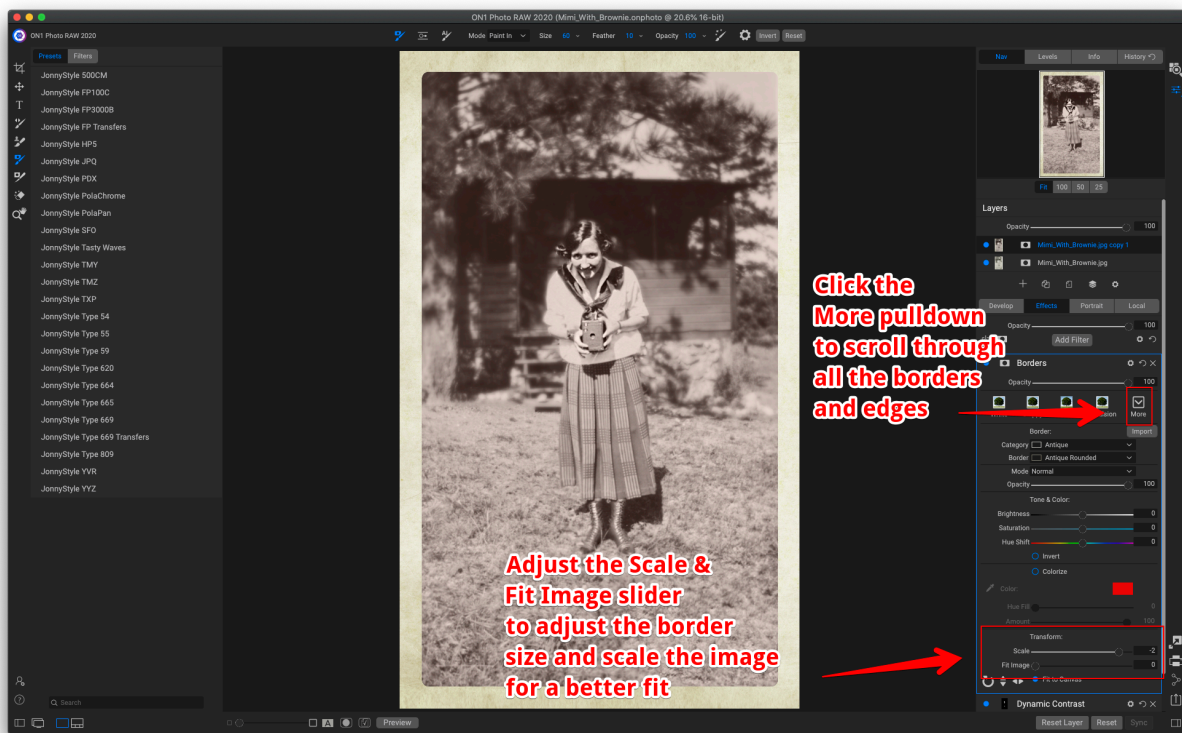
ADD A BORDER

For my finishing touch on the image, I'm going to use a new border, replacing the original border for a cleaner image. Adding the Border filter in Effects gives me the ability to add a wide range of borders and photographic edges.



I could choose another cleaner antique edge to replace the original one, or I could use something completely different.

For this image, I'm going to use a clean white border with a black pinline bringing a completely new look to this vintage photograph.



Now that I'm done with my editing I can click the Export button to Export out a full size JPG file to easily share with my family or post on social media.

Using a variety of the powerful tools available in ON1 PHOTO RAW 2020 you can easily bring new life to your old photos. And remember, there is no right or wrong way to do things. The great part of photo editing is trying new techniques and finding out which ones work best for you.

The beauty of ON1 PHOTO RAW 2020 is that it is a non-destructive photo editor. At any point you can reset your editing and start fresh from the beginning, or use Versions to create a variety of different looks for the same image.

I highly recommend checking out our video tutorials. These range from quick getting started videos to more in-depth recorded webinars covering basic skills to professional level editing.

And look forward to more ePublications in the NEW ON1 Plus Bookshelf

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[ON1 User Guides](#)

[ON1 Video Tutorials for Retouching](#)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jonny has been making photographs now for over 30 years and has worked all over the photo industry in various facets: from his first job in a photo lab, to starting his own custom darkroom business. He also co-founded a studio & gallery where his sole mission was to turn people onto the art of photography. In 2014, he was a closing speaker for Creative Live's PhotoWeek. His photographs have been exhibited in both group and solo shows in galleries and museums around the country.

Jonny has been working for ON1 for over a decade creating film looks and presets under the JonnyStyle moniker.

You'll find him frequently shooting with one of his vintage Polaroid cameras in Portland, Oregon, 'sharing the love' for the instant print.

Jonny will be releasing his ultimate JonnyStyle collection of film looks based on 35mm, Medium & Large format and Polaroid film presets and textures later this year in 2020. To be the first to know when these are available, connect with Jonny on social media: @jonnydavenport