

# CHAPTER 8 - FADED PHOTOGRAPHS

Layer Adjustment  
Layer Blend Mode

Very light pictures are sometime dismissed as gone forever. Do not discard them! We will show you a couple of ways to bring a picture back to life. If the first technique does not meet your wishes, try the more complex method. Different problems respond to different techniques.

**Tools Used**  
Adjustment layer fixes are the primary tools to fix faded photos. These include **Levels Adjustment**, **Hue/Saturation**, and **Brightness/Contrast**.

**Concepts to Understand**  
Several adjustment layers will be used. Understanding the **Levels Adjustment** is particularly important. The advanced example, works with multiple image layers and their blending modes, will help solve the most problems.

## Can My Faded Picture Be Recovered?

Many old photographs have faded so much the image is barely distinguishable. However, if the photograph was perfect once, and has faded evenly over time, we



Figure 8-1. Cabinet card in actual condition.

can probably bring the image back to a near-perfect condition. However, if the picture was overexposed at the time it was taken, there may not be any detail there to restore.

This chapter will show how old pictures that seemed to be lost forever can be brought back to life.

## Adjustment Layers Method: Easy & Effective

This is actually a simple way to improve your faded images, and works well in most cases. It may not restore your image to perfection, but can bring back most of the lost detail.

This method requires that you create several adjustment layers, one on top of the other. Each one will gradually bring your picture back to life a little more. Do these steps, and you will be able to fix your faded picture in less than a minute. Yes, less than a minute!

### 1. Levels Adjustment

In the **Layers Palette** create a **Levels Adjustment** layer. You will see a black graph with peaks and valleys that represent the distribution of color in your photo. Levels theory is not discussed here, just the simple actions that improve your image.

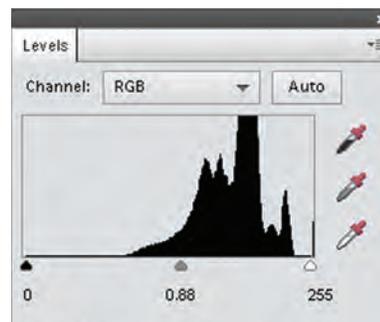


Figure 8-2. Levels histogram of faded image.

Most likely the graph will be skewed heavily to the right. Drag the black triangle beneath the graph (Black Point marker) from the far left side to a point where the graph starts to show some height. If the white triangle is beneath a flat area of the graph, drag it to the left to where the graph starts to rise. The middle gray triangle will probably be centered between the black and white, but verify that it is. We want it equally between the black and white triangles.

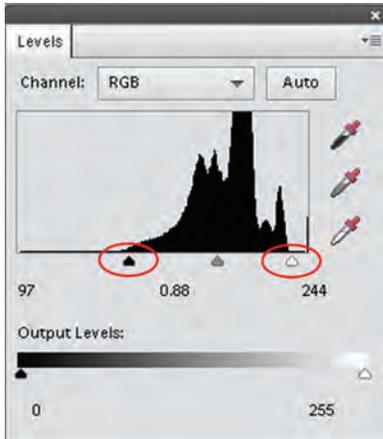


Figure 8-3. Levels adjusted to darken image.

Don't worry if your image looks really bad now. The colors are probably hideous. We are going to fix that next.

## 2. Hue/Saturation Adjustment to the Rescue

The **Levels Adjustment** exaggerated the colors (Figure 8-7), these will be toned down.

Add a **Hue/Adjustment** layer. You will see three slider

bars, but only the **Saturation** will be used. Drag the slider button to the left (Figure 8-4) until the image takes on a hue that matches your desired output. The next step will work on brightness and contrast.



Figure 8-4. Hue/Saturation Adjustment.

## 3. Brightness and Contrast Adjustment

The image is close to the final look, however if a **Brightness/Contrast layer** is added, the clarity and detail can be enhanced even more.

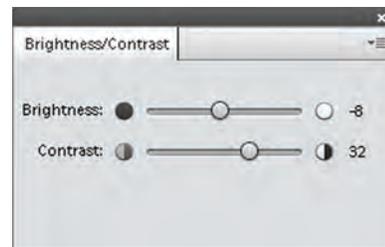


Figure 8-5. Brightness/Contrast Adjustment.

For this photo, the **Brightness** was decreased slightly but the **Contrast** increased a little more. The amount you adjust will be dependent on your image and personal preference (Figure 8-9).



Figure 8-6. Original photo.



Figure 8-7. Levels Adjustment.



Figure 8-8. Hue Adjustment.



Figure 8-9. Contrast Adjusted.