



Undo & History

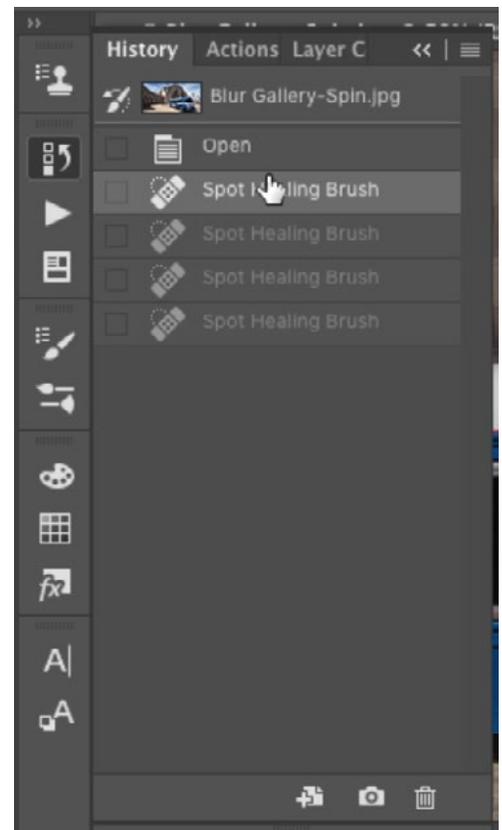
# Undo & History

In this lesson, we're going to learn about using undo's and the History panel. Here, we will cover the basics, and in a different lesson, we'll work on a more advanced level.

**The undo command** The standard keyboard shortcut for undoing the last thing you did [in any program] is Command+Z (Ctrl+Z on Win). In Photoshop, you can also go to the Edit menu and choose Undo. If the very last thing you did was undo something, then this menu will show "Redo" instead. This is because Photoshop will only allow you to undo one step.

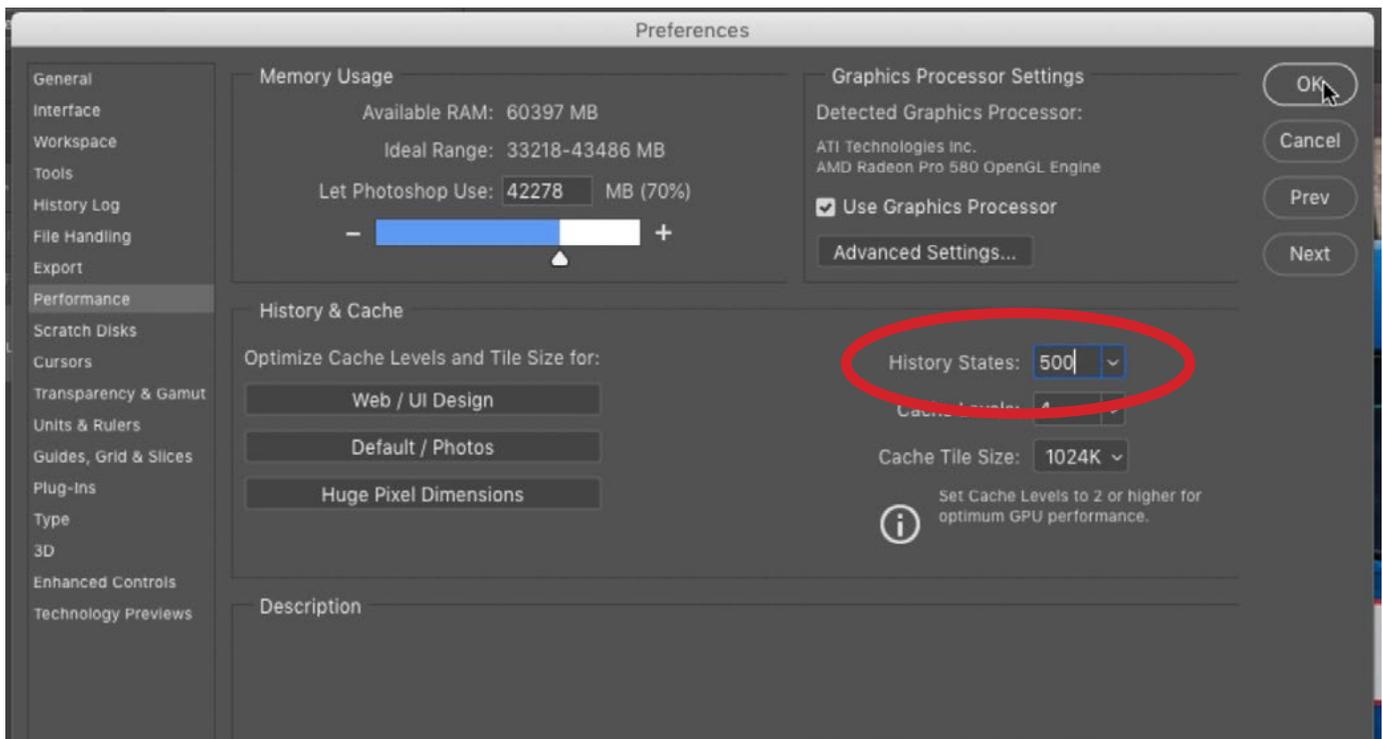
**Multiple undo's** We mentioned above that you can only use the undo command once. (If you try to use it a second time, it will redo the step.) If you would like to have multiple undo's, you will need to use the History panel. If the History panel is not already visible in your Photoshop interface, you can access it by going to the Window menu and choosing History.

The History panel will display a list of everything you've done to the image since you opened it in Photoshop. At the very top of the list will be the word "Open" and that's because the first thing you did to the image was open it. The step at the bottom of the list will be the very last thing you did to the picture. You can click on any of these steps to revert the image to the stage it was in when you made that step. Clicking on the item that is one up from the bottom of the list would be the equivalent to using the undo command, because it will undo the last thing you did. If you would like to undo multiple steps, simply click on one of the steps in the list to undo every step taken after it.



**Photoshop's History panel lists everything you've done to the image.**

By default, the History panel can only record a certain number of steps, but you can change that within Photoshop's preferences. Go to the Photoshop menu and choose Preferences > Performance. (If you are using Windows, the Preferences will be located under the Window menu.) The Performance section of the Preferences dialog will appear and there will be a "History States" setting on the right. Here, you can type in anything from 1 to 1000 and this will determine how many steps the History panel can record. You might be wondering why you shouldn't just type in 1000. Well, Photoshop records all of the history steps on your computer's scratch disk. When working on a complex image, you might get an error that says your scratch disk is full. This basically means that the file that keeps track of all the steps you've taken with your image is full and can't get any bigger. You would then no longer be able to make any more changes to your image. The number you type into the History States field will depend on how big your hard drive is and some other variables, but personally, I find that 500 is a good number to use. Click OK to save the change and exit the Preferences dialog.



**You can change how many steps Photoshop will record in the History panel by changing the "History States" setting within the Performance section of the Preferences dialog.**

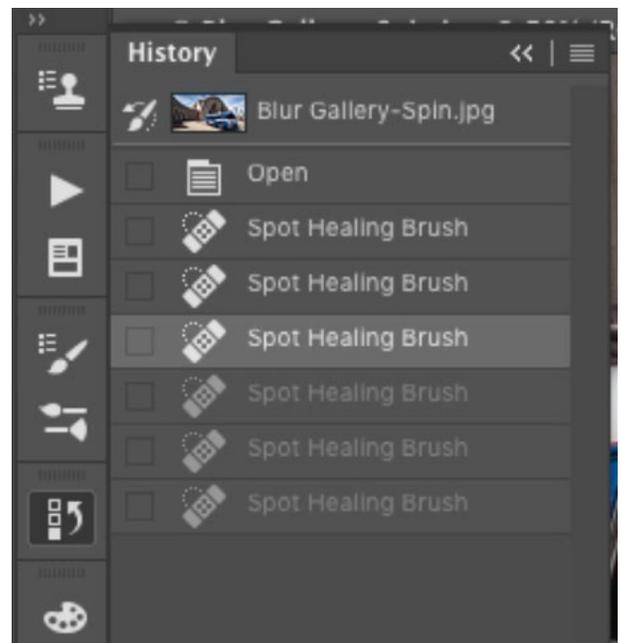
**Keyboard shortcuts for the History panel** I sometimes find that the History panel takes up too much room on my screen and I would prefer to navigate up and down the list by using keyboard shortcuts. The shortcuts would be for the “step backward” and “step forward” commands. The step backward command will take you back a step in your Photoshop process and, unlike the undo command, you can use it over and over again (until you get back to the stage where you opened the document). The step forward command can be used after you used the step backward command and realized you wanted to redo some of those steps. You can find these menu commands by clicking on the little menu in the top right corner of the History panel or by clicking on the Edit menu at the top of Photoshop’s interface. However, it’s much easier to use keyboard shortcuts.

**Step backward:** Option+Command+Z (Alt+Ctrl+Z on Win)

**Step forward:** Shift+Command+Z (Shift+Ctrl+Z on Win)

When you step backward a few times, all of the steps beneath the current state of your document (the ones you undid) will be grayed out in the History panel. It’s important to know that if you should do anything in your document at this point, those grayed out steps will disappear and you will no longer be able to “redo” them.

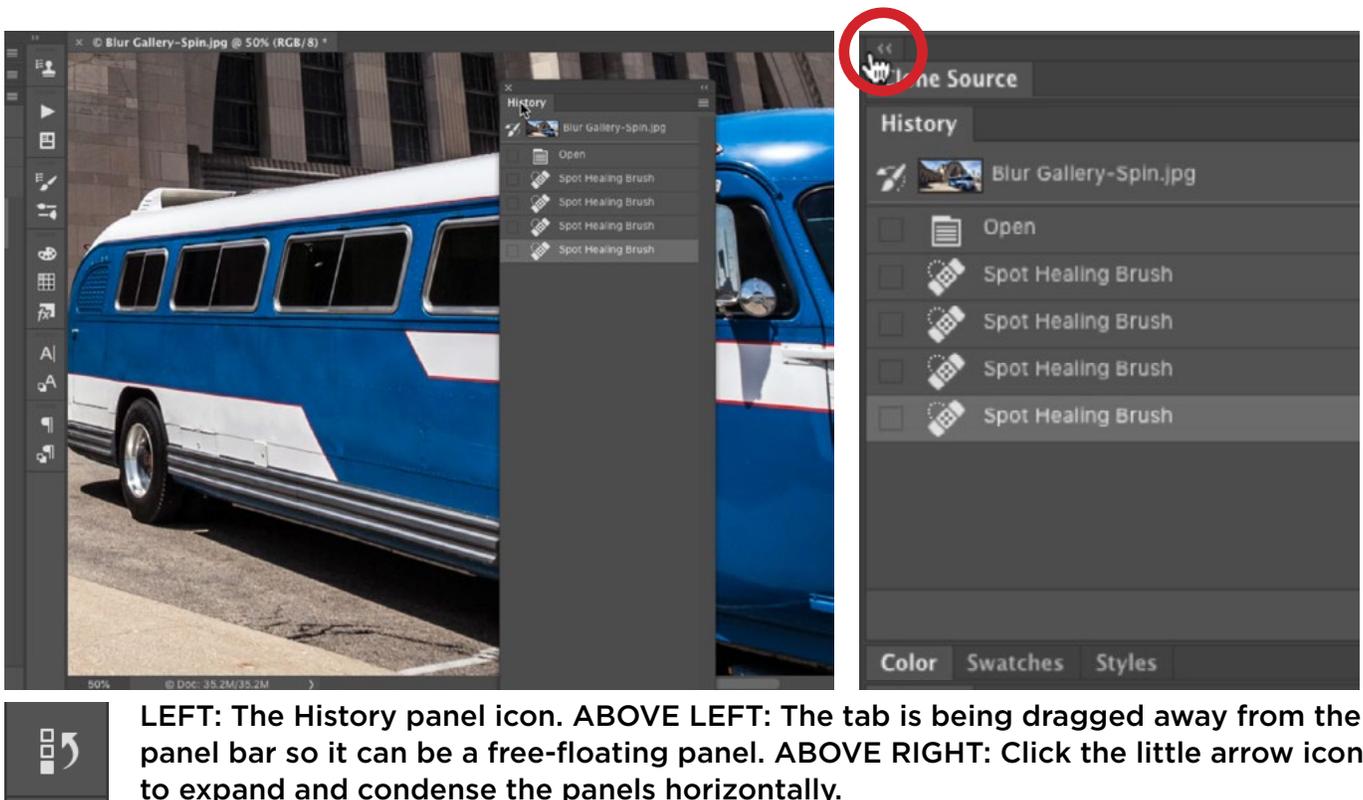
**What is recorded in the History** There are some things that will not be recorded in your Photoshop history and will therefore not be undoable. These are things that would not have the potential of changing the look of your document. For example, if you change the foreground or background color, or if you change the zoom view of the document, it will not show up as a state in the History panel.



**Here, we “stepped backward” four steps and you can see that the steps we “undid” became grayed out. If we were to do anything to our image at this point, these grayed-out steps would disappear and we would no longer be able to redo them.**

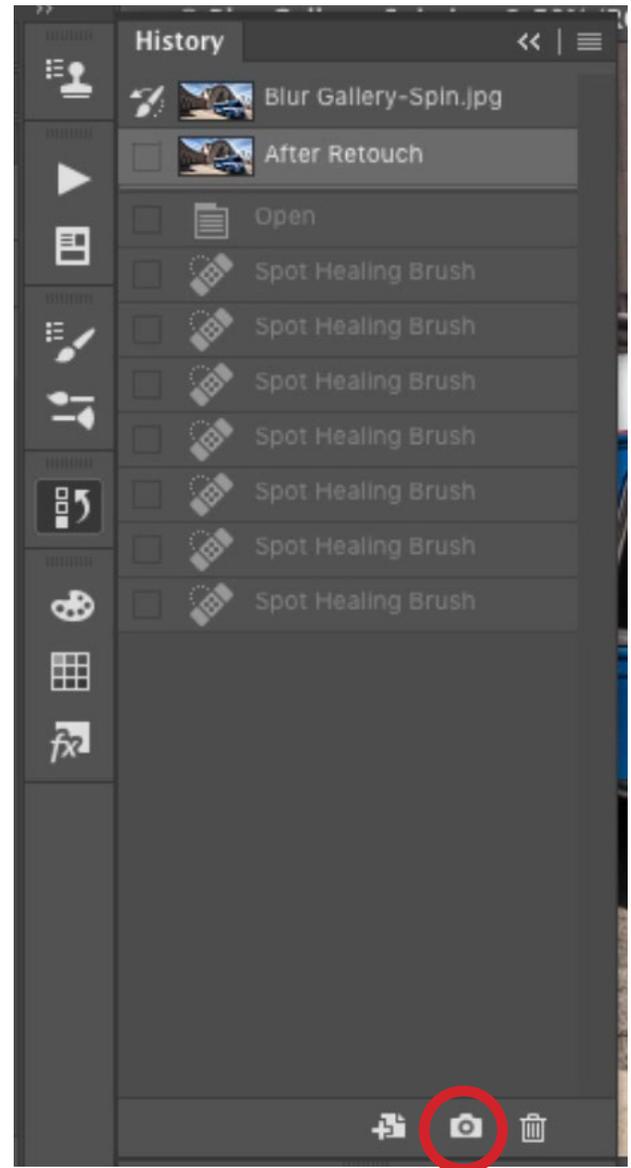
When you close a document, all of the saved history states and snapshots will be thrown away. It doesn't matter if you save the file or not. This is because all of the history is stored in a temporary scratch disk file that will be deleted the moment the document is closed.

**Positioning the History panel** By default, the History panel is docked with your other Photoshop panels. To minimize it down to an icon, click on the word History at the top of the panel or click on the little arrow at the top of the panel. Click on the History panel icon to expand the panel again. You can undock the panel so that it becomes a floating panel that you can position anywhere you'd like in your interface. To do this, click on the name of the tab and drag it away from the bar of docked panels. Then, you can position the panel by clicking and dragging on that tab that displays the name, "History." To re-dock the panel with the other panels, click and drag the tab back to the bar of panels. A blue highlight will appear, showing you where the panel will be docked when you release the mouse button. If you'd like it docked next to the other panels, release the mouse button when the vertical blue line appears. If you'd like it docked WITH the other panels (in the



same list), position it between the other panel icons and release the mouse button when a horizontal blue line appears. If the panels appear as icons and you would like to see them expanded horizontally, click on the icon that looks like two little arrows at the very top of the panel list. If the panels are expanded and you would like to condense them back down into icons, click on that little arrow icon again.

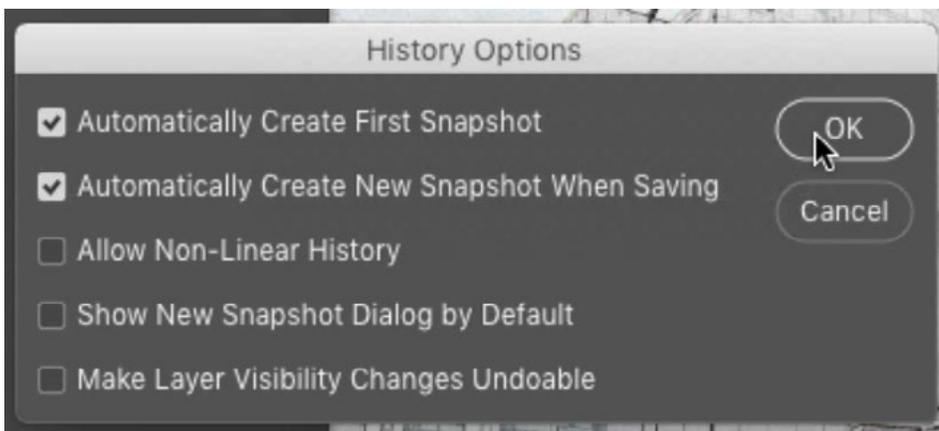
**Snapshots** Snapshots allow you to save a particular state of your document so that you can go back to it at any time. Let's say that you adjusted your image and you're happy with the result, but you would like to see what the image would look like with additional effects applied. You could create a snapshot of the current state (that you know you like) and then continue working on the image. If it turns out that you don't like the additional effects that you applied, you could click on that snapshot to easily return to that state in which you liked the image. To create a snapshot of the current state of your image, click on the little camera icon at the bottom of the History panel. The snapshot will appear near the top of the History panel and it will have the default name of "Snapshot 1." You can change the name by double-clicking on the text and typing in a new one. To return to the state of your image (captured in that snapshot) at any later time, simply click on the snapshot's thumbnail in the History panel.



**Click the camera icon to create a snapshot. Snapshots will appear at the top of the History panel.**

Photoshop automatically creates a snapshot when a document is opened. It is located at the very top of the History panel and has the same name as the image file. Clicking on this snapshot will bring you back to what your image originally looked like. It will revert the document to the exact state it was in when you opened the file.

There are other things you can do to have Photoshop automatically create snapshots. If you click on the little menu icon in the top right corner of the History panel, a menu will appear and one of the choices is History Options. Choose this and a dialog will appear, containing a list of check boxes. The first item, “Automatically Create First Snapshot,” is turned on by default. You may also want to turn on the second check box, “Automatically Create New Snapshot when Saving.” This will create a new snapshot every time you save your document. The name of the snapshot will be the date/time when you saved.



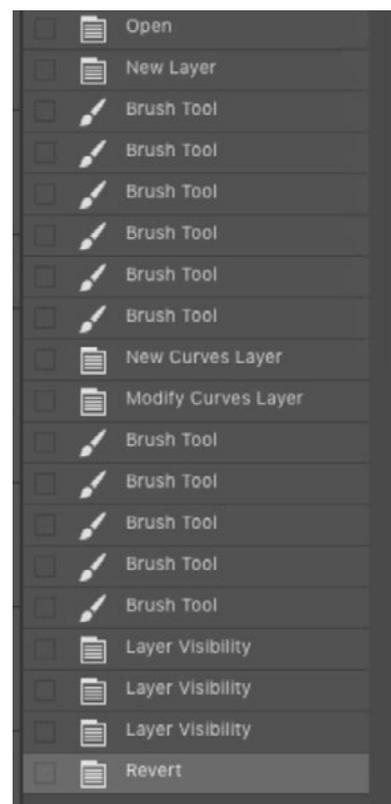
**The History Options allow you to specify that Photoshop create a new snapshot every time you save the document.**

**Non-Linear History** Another setting within the History Options dialog is the “Allow Linear History” check box. If you turn this on, the History panel will behave a little differently. By default, when you step backward in your history for a document, the steps that you undid will become grayed out in the History panel and if you did something else to your image at that point, all of those grayed-out steps would be deleted. However, if you turn on the “Allow Linear History” check box and then step backward in your history, those steps that would previously be grayed out

will NOT be grayed out. If you did something else to your image at this point, the step would be inserted at the bottom of the History list, leaving all of the other steps intact. No steps are deleted. This can be somewhat confusing, though, due to things getting out of order. For example. Let's say you retouched out an object soon after opening the document and then applied a series of changes after that. In the video example image, we retouched out some stickers from a bus windshield. Then, several steps later, you clicked back on the step where the object was still present and applied a filter. The filter step will be added at the bottom of the history list, but the object will be back, and that's because the filter was applied to that earlier version of the image. Because this can get confusing, I usually keep the Non-Linear History check box off. I will instead rely on snapshots to save a certain state of my image.

**Make Layer Visibility Changes Undoable** By default, Photoshop will not record a change in layer visibility as a history step. When working with a document that has many, many layers, however, you might WANT Photoshop to record when layers were turned off and on, as layer visibility can change the look of your image. You can specify that changes in layer visibility be recorded by turning on the “Make Layer Visibility Changes Undoable” within the History Options dialog. (Remember, you get to the History Options dialog by clicking on the little menu in the top right corner of the History panel.)

If, however, you are not using layer visibility to change the look of your image, you might want to keep the setting turned off so that it is not adding lots of extra steps to the History panel. For example, I often times will create a layer or adjustment layer to use as a guide for what's going on in my image. In the video example, I created a Curves adjustment layer and used it to brighten up the image a LOT. This allowed me to better see where I had painted with black on an underlying layer. I toggled the



**Use the History Options to specify that the History panel record changes in layer visibility.**

visibility of this adjustment layer many times as I worked on darkening the underlying layer. If Photoshop were to be recording the changes in layer visibility, my history list would be unnecessarily long, so for an instance like this, I would keel the “Make Layer Visibility Changes Undoable” check box turned off.

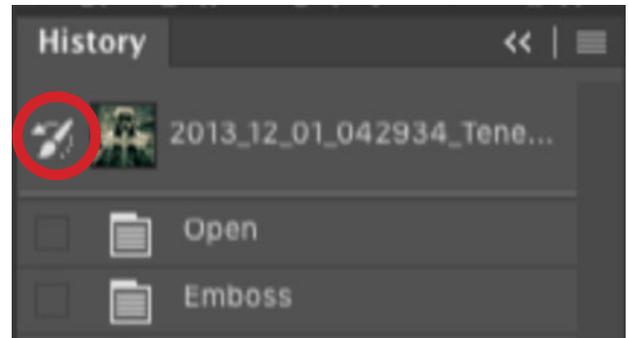
**Show new snapshot dialog by default** We mentioned above that you can change the name of a snapshot by double-clicking on the text and then typing in a new name. If you know that you are going to change the name of the snapshot when you create it, you can hold down the Option key (Alt on Win) while clicking on the little camera icon. This will cause Photoshop to present you with a New Snapshot dialog, in which you can specify the name and then click OK. Now let’s say that you ALWAYS rename your snapshots. If this is the case, I’d recommend turning on the “Show New Snapshot Dialog by Default” check box within the History Options dialog. With this setting turned on, Photoshop will bring up the New Snapshot dialog every time you click the camera icon to create a new snapshot. This allows you to easily specify a name for the snapshot and then click OK.

**Clear History** Once you are completely finished making changes to your image, you have the option to clear the history. This will remove all of the history states listed in the History panel but it will not delete your snapshots. Clear history by clicking on the little menu in the top right corner of the History panel and choosing Clear History. To delete a snapshot, simply click and drag the snapshot to the trash can icon at the bottom of the History panel.

**Save out a snapshot as a separate document** You can save out a snapshot as a separate file, giving you another version of your image file. To do this, click on the snapshot to make it active and then click the little plus (+) icon at the bottom of the History panel. This is the button to “Create new document from current state.” The new file will open in a separate Photoshop window.

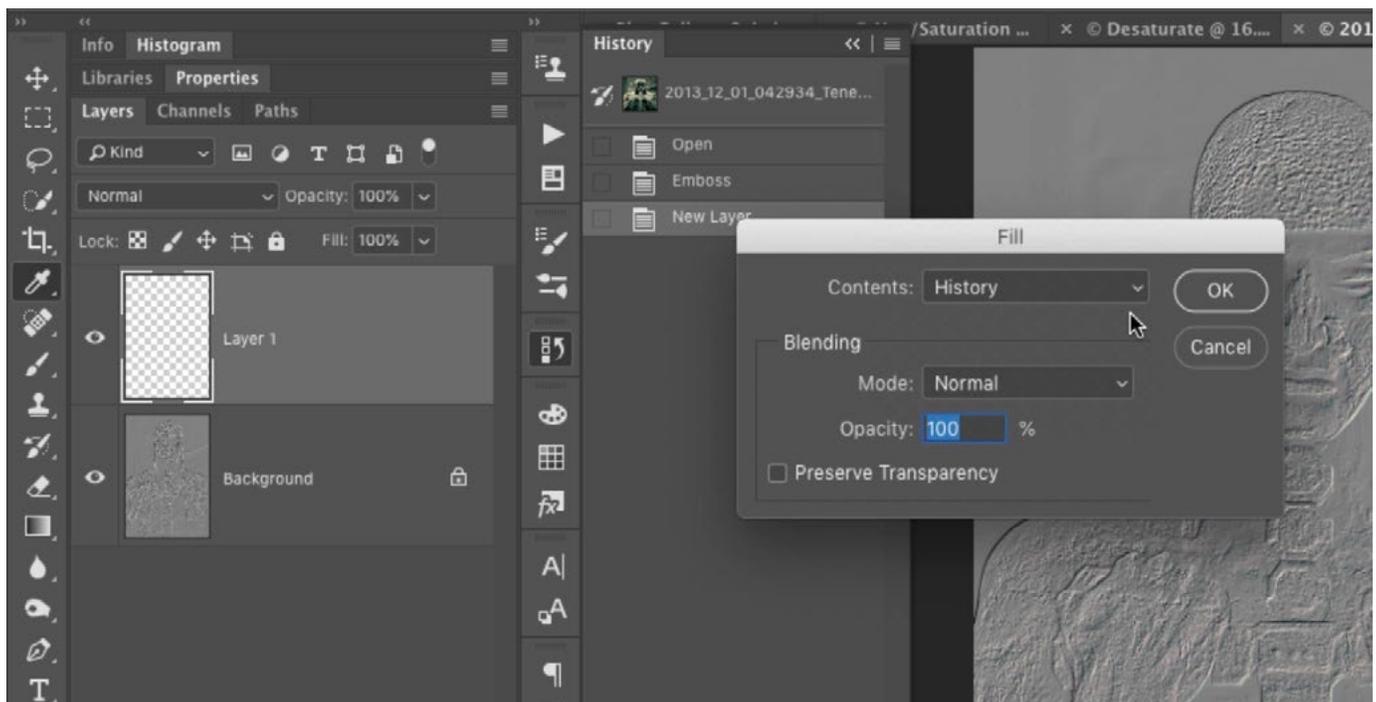
**Fill and paint with history** The History panel is not just about undos and returning to previous states of your document. You can also fill with and paint with these different versions. To fill or paint with a previous state of your image, you’ll first need to specify which state you’d like to fill or paint with. Looking at the History panel, you’ll notice that there is a little paint brush icon that is to the left of the top

snapshot by default. This means that if you fill or paint with a state in history, it will use this snapshot to fill or paint with. If you'd like to change which history state is being used, simply click on the little square to the left of the name of the history state in order to place the little paint brush icon in that square. This is the version of your image that will be used when you fill or paint with history.



**This brush icon indicates what history state will be used when you fill with history or use the History Brush.**

If you would like to fill your document (or a selected area) with a previous state of the image, go to the Edit menu and choose Fill. In the Fill dialog, the Contents menu can be used to specify what you're filling with and one of the options is History. When you use this option, Photoshop will fill the layer (or selection) with the history state you specified.

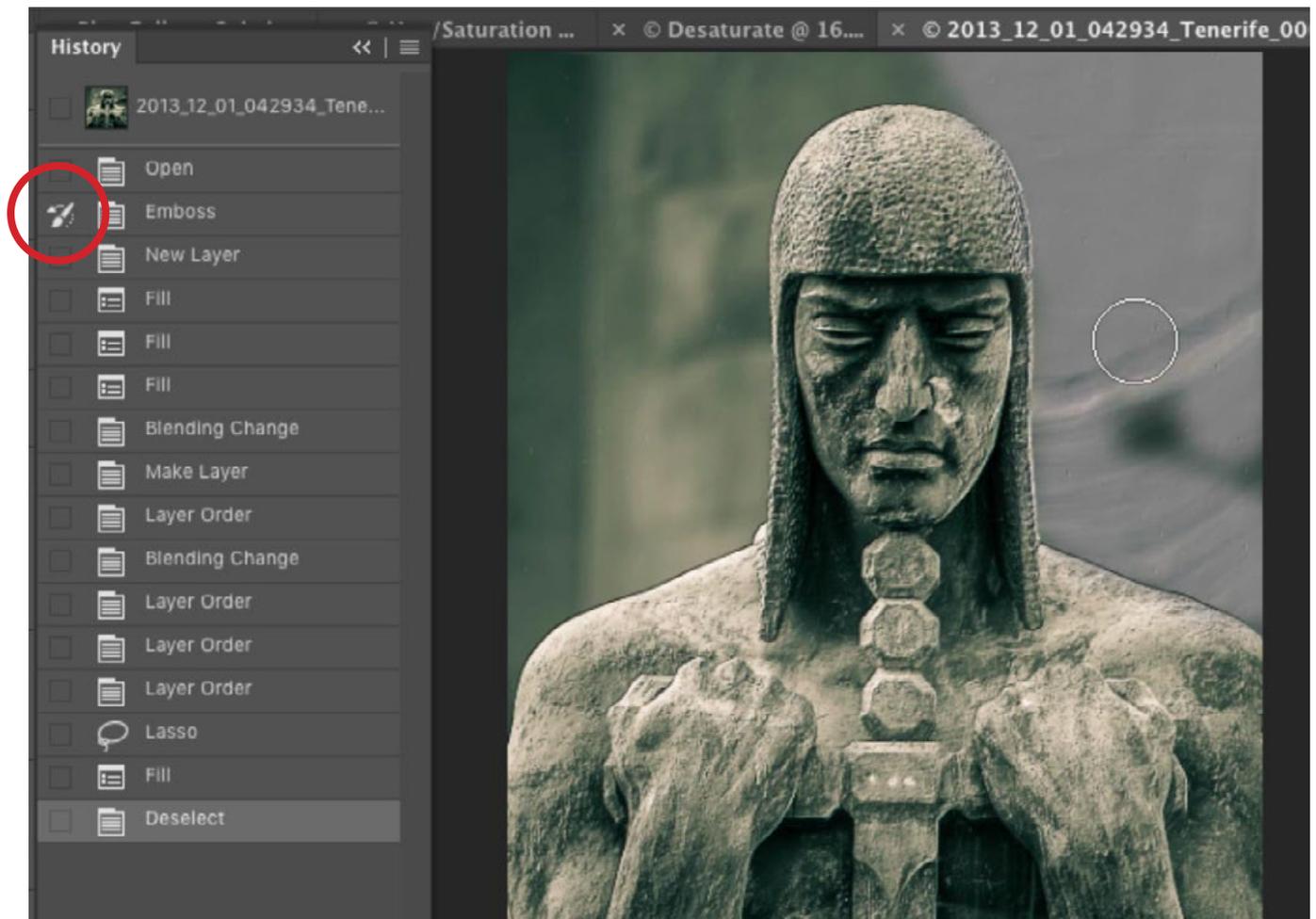


**Here, we're using the Fill command to fill the document with the specified history state.**

You can also paint with an earlier version of your image using the History Brush, which can be found in the Tool Bar on the left side of the interface. The History Brush is going to paint with whichever version of your picture that has the History Brush icon next to it. This is nice because you have many of the settings that you'd have with the Brush Tool (opacity, blending modes, etc.). Note that the History Brush is covered in more detail in the lesson that covers advanced history and undo techniques.



**The History Brush can be found in the Tool Bar.**



**The History Brush is being used to paint in the specified history state.**