

Watermarking Your Images for the Web

Add an Embossed Copyright Watermark to Your Images

© 2004, Glenn E. Mitchell II, Ph.D. of The Light's Right Studio

Creating a Web gallery is easy. Lots of tools that digital photographers use include features for generating Web proofs and creating Web pages to display images. It is important to remain aware that anyone who browses your new online gallery can download the images. Once they download them, they can make whatever use they want of your work.

Oh, sure! You can sue, if you even discover your image was liberated. That's costly and time consuming. The proactive strategy is to limit the usefulness of any pilfered images by branding them. That way, you do not have to limit your Web gallery to tiny, postage stamp size thumbnail images.

Stamping your images with text is easy enough. You have probably seen something of the sort already on one online gallery or another -- image after image with something like diagonal lines of bright red text that scream "Proof" or "Copyrighted."



Figure 1. Branding an image with an embossed copyright. A colorized B&W image of an old barn in Sneads, AL.

There is a more elegant solution. You can brand your images with an embossed, see-thru effect that displays the entire image while rendering it useless to anyone else for reproduction.

Embossing A Copyright Watermark

Embossing copyright information on your images is not difficult. There are just a few steps, and you can easily automate them with a Photoshop Action.

The first step in creating a watermark for your image is to add text layers to your image. All you need to do is grab the Text tool and click on the image where you want text to appear. Typically, you will want three text layers: one that says something like “PROOF” or “Do Not Copy,” a copyright symbol, and your name. For the image below, the Garamond ITC font was used, with 72 points for the “PROOF” text, 144 points for the copyright symbol, and 36 points for “The Light’s Right Studio” text.



Figure 2. Text layers added to the image.

The embossed watermark effect comes from using the Bevel and Emboss layer style dialog. *Figure 3* shows the suggested settings: Inner Bevel, 10 pixel size. You can drag and drop the layer style for the first text layer to the other two text layers in order quickly copy the settings.

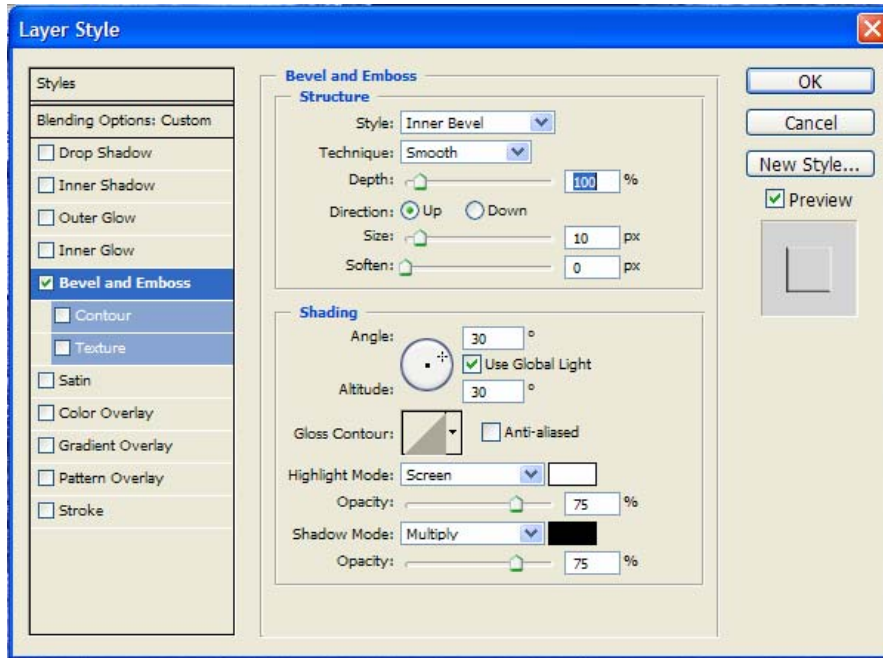


Figure 3. Typical Layer Style settings to emboss the watermark for an image. You can vary the intensity of the embossed effect.

Making the watermark transparent is easy at this point. You change the fill from 100% to 0%. This will preserve the beveled and embossed effect. If you instead reduce the opacity to 0%, both the color of the text and the embossing will disappear.

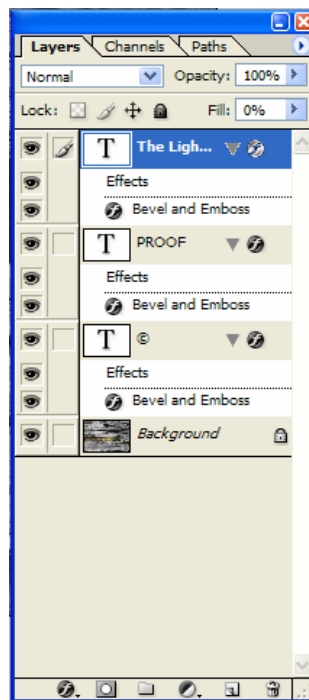


Figure 4. Setting the Fill to 0% will make the watermark transparent.

If you save the text layers in your file, you can change the text itself or move it to another location on the image.

Adding Metadata

After you emboss your copyright notice, you may as well go one extra step and embed your copyright information inside your image.

If you select File|File Info from the Photoshop menu, a dialog will open and you can type in your copyright information. When someone opens the file in Photoshop or another image editing application, the copyright information you embedded will be accessible. If you include the URL for your online gallery, Photoshop can take the user straight to it.

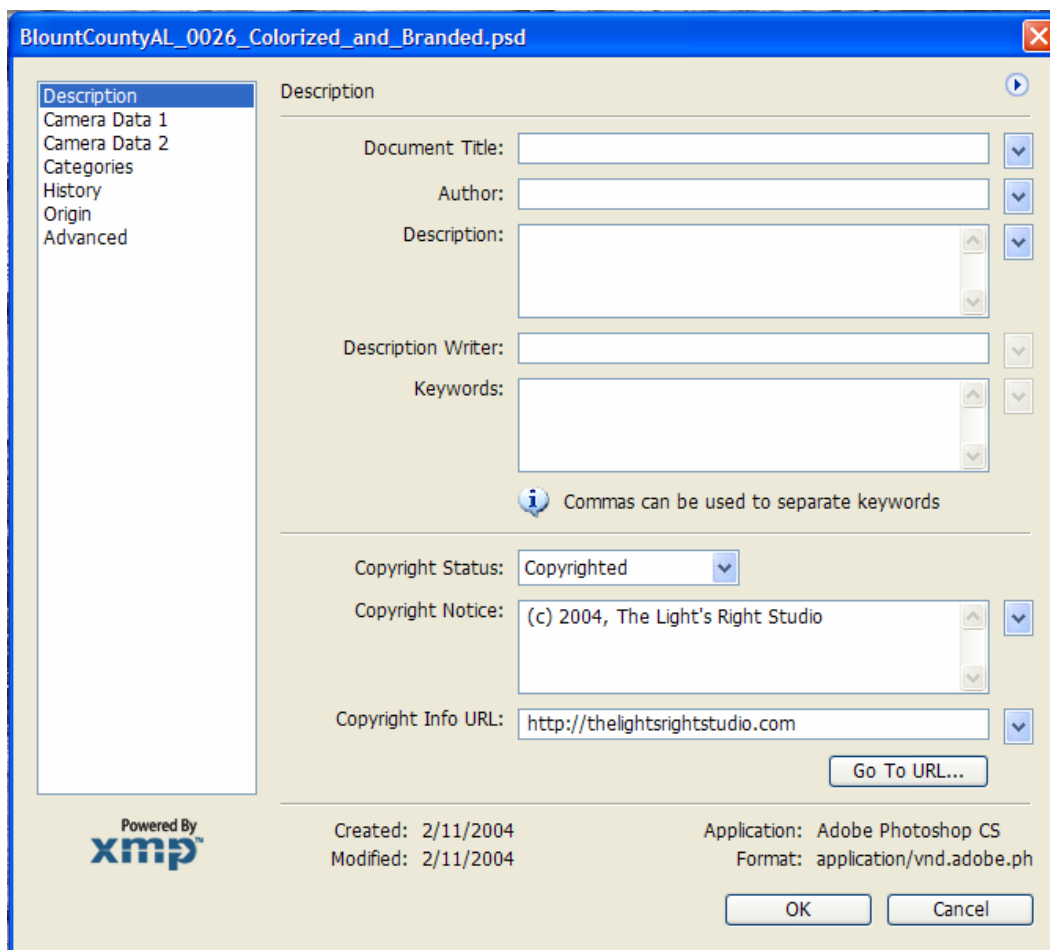


Figure 5. The File Info dialog in Photoshop.

If you selected “Copyrighted Work” for Copyright Status, Photoshop will also append a small copyright symbol before the file name at the top of the application, notifying the user that file is protected by copyright.

Conclusion

Adding an embossed watermark to your image takes just a few steps, and the effect is impressive. Your image shows through a large copyright symbol and whatever copyright information you want to add.

The effect on your image is permanent once you flatten the image and save it. You can then add the image to your online gallery and be assured that no one can download it and easily reverse the embossing.