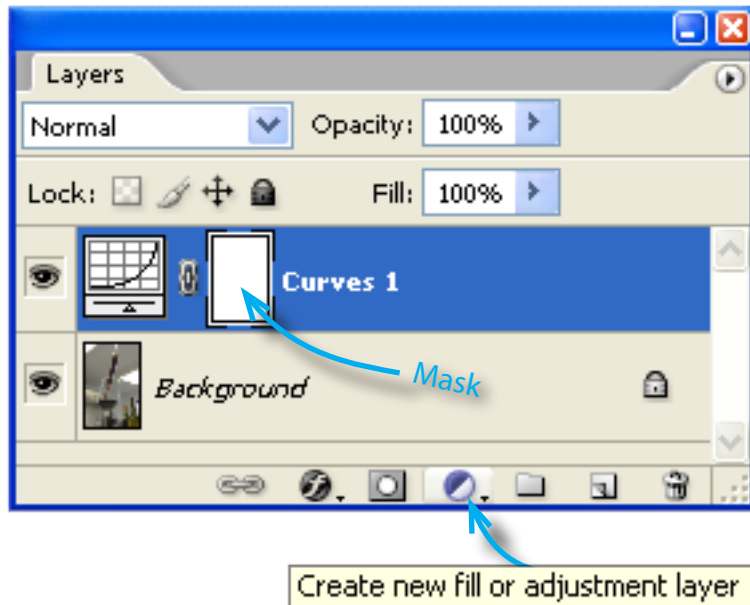


Masking

made simple

Often I need to make part of a Photoshop layer “disappear.” My reason might be that I want an adjustment layer to only affect part of the image below it.

When you create an adjustment layer (that black & white disc at the bottom of your layers palette), it automatically gives you a mask. If you paint black **on that mask**, it “un-does” whatever you’ve told the adjustment to do... just in the area where you’ve painted. A nifty thing about this mask is that if you paint **white** over the black you just



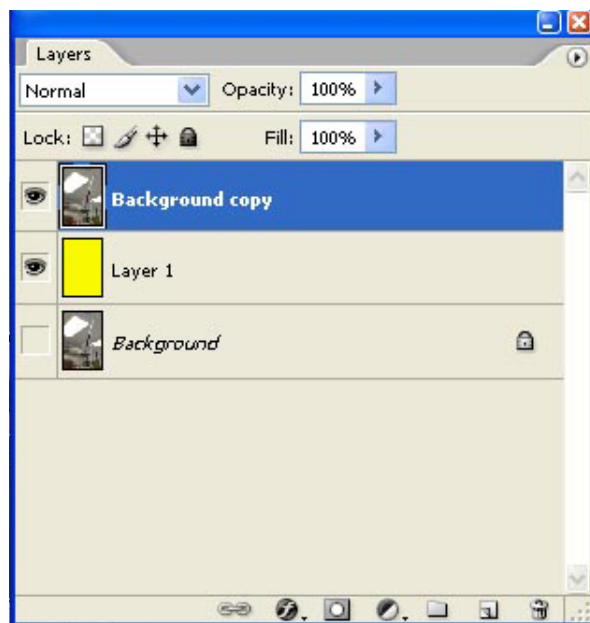
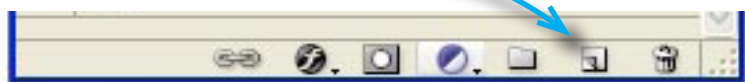
painted, you'll allow the adjustment layer to do your adjustment. If you paint grey (say, using a 20% opacity brush), you'll undo the effect only partially. That's really powerful!

Often what I need to remove is part of an image layer. By doing this, I can let the layer below it show through. If a building has a boring sky behind it, I can drag a pretty sky layer from another photo to be under the layer with my building on it. Then I can "erase" my boring sky, revealing the pretty one.

If I just use my Eraser tool, and accidentally remove part of the building's chimney, I'm stuck! That's why I use a layer mask.

Here's how I do it:

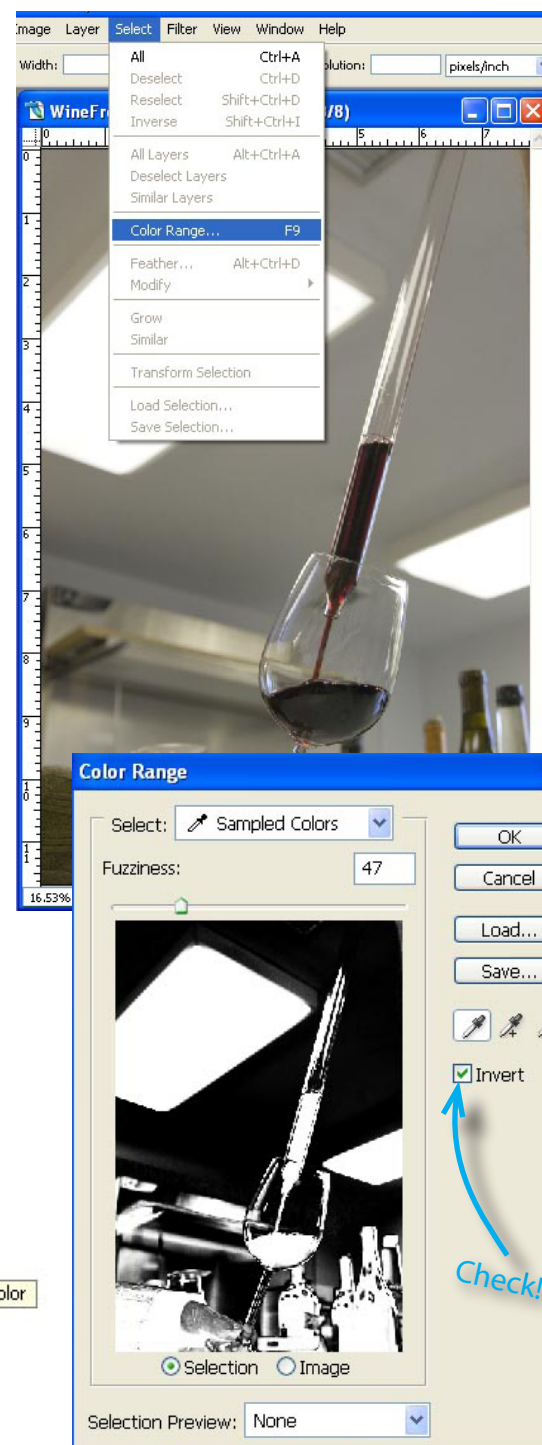
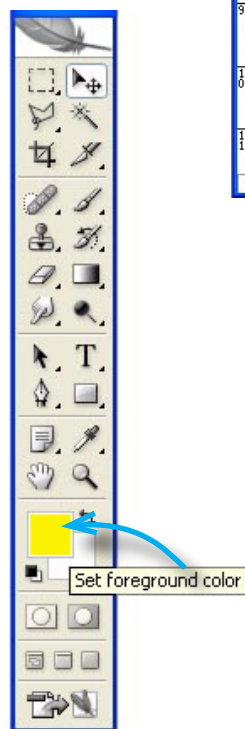
I prepare for this by dragging my layer (in the Layers palette) to the **New Layer icon**



That duplicates my layer.

Then I click back on my original layer in the layers palette and click (simply click) on that **New Layer icon** again. This gives me a new, *empty* layer. By double-clicking on the **Foreground Color icon**, I select a color I don't see anywhere in the photo.

Note:
In trying this method at first, start with an image of your own with only **one layer**!



I press Alt/option -backspace to fill this layer with the strange new color.

Then I go up to the top of my screen and click **Select** and drag down to **Color Range** (or I just press F9).

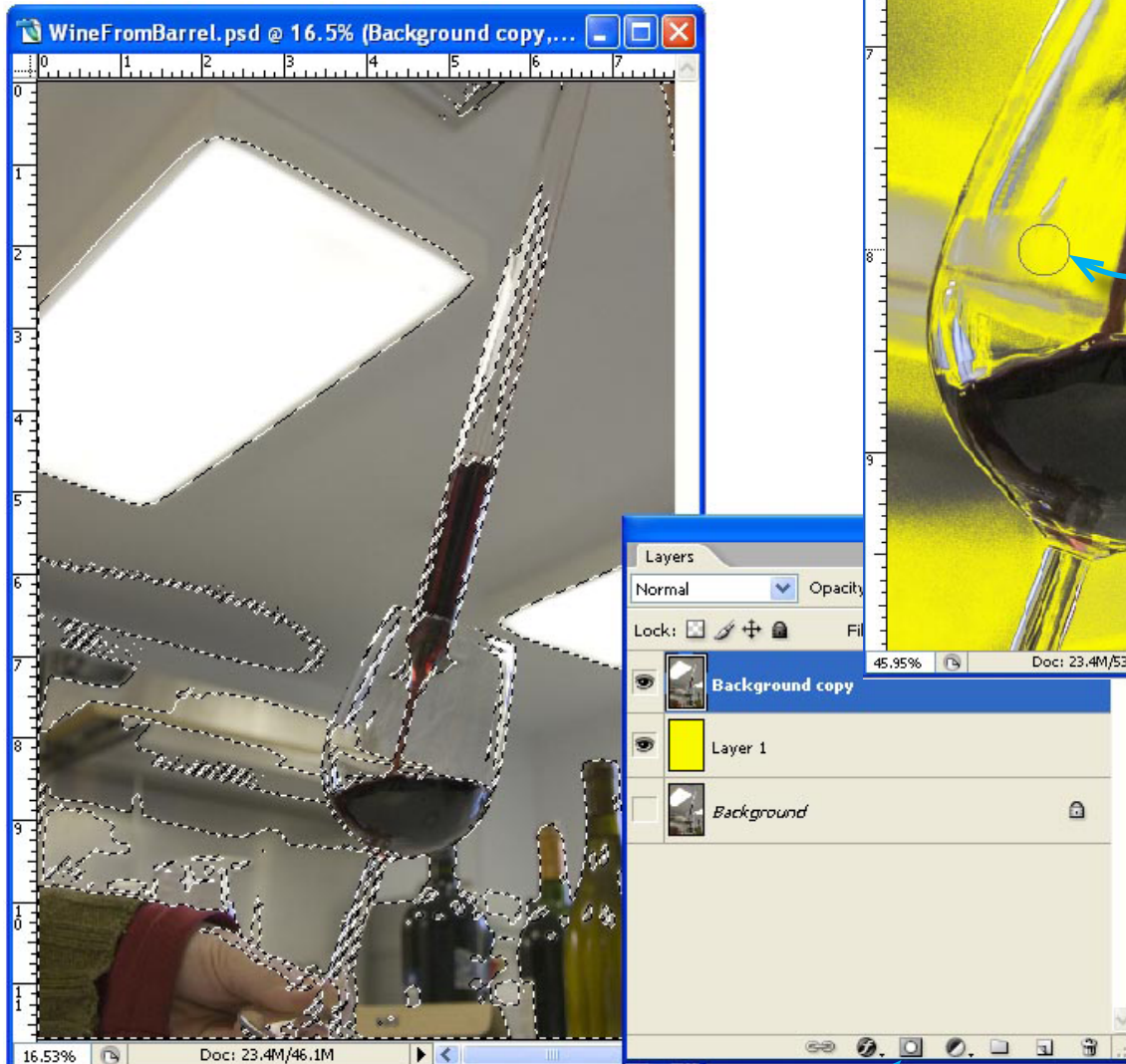
On my image, I click on the dominant color of the background (which is hopefully different from my subject). To add to my selection I hold Shift or use the eyedropper with the plus (+) in the Color Range dialog box.

Since I want to remove these colors, I **check the Invert box**.

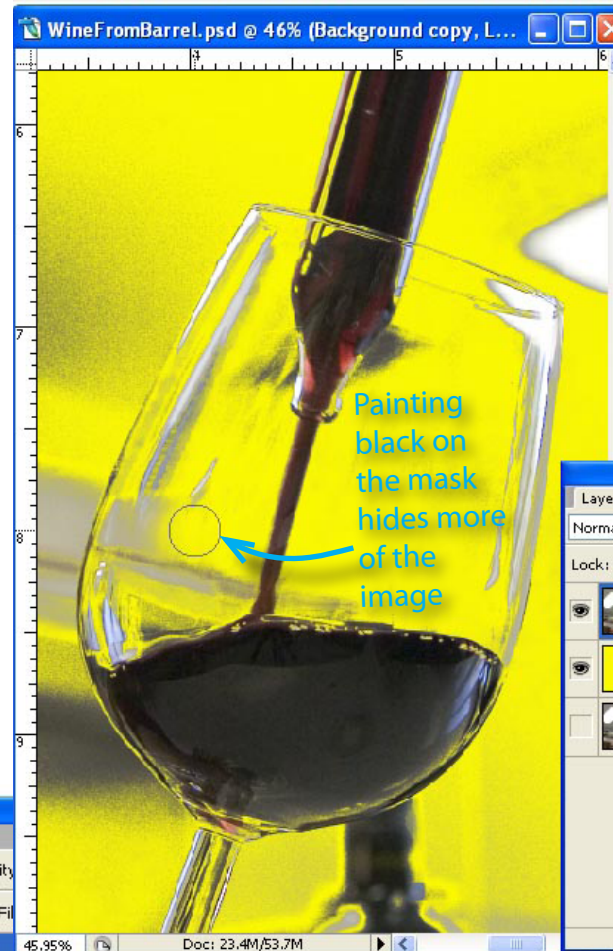
When I click OK, the dialog box closes and I can see by the dotted lines ("marching ants") that I have a selection.

Note:

Although I've used Select>Color Range to make the selection in this example, you can use any (or several) of the selection tools to create a selection to make a mask. Once you have the mask, you can also use the selection tools to add to or remove areas from the mask.

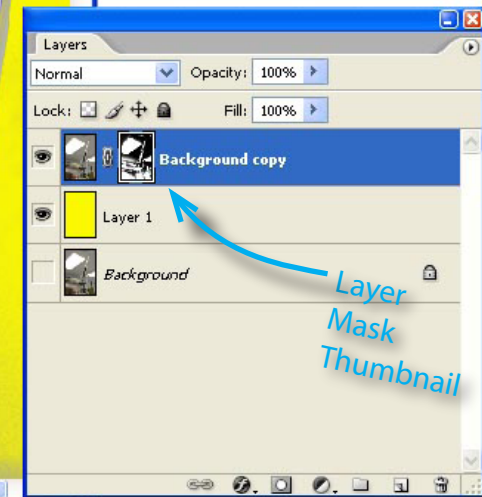


Add layer mask

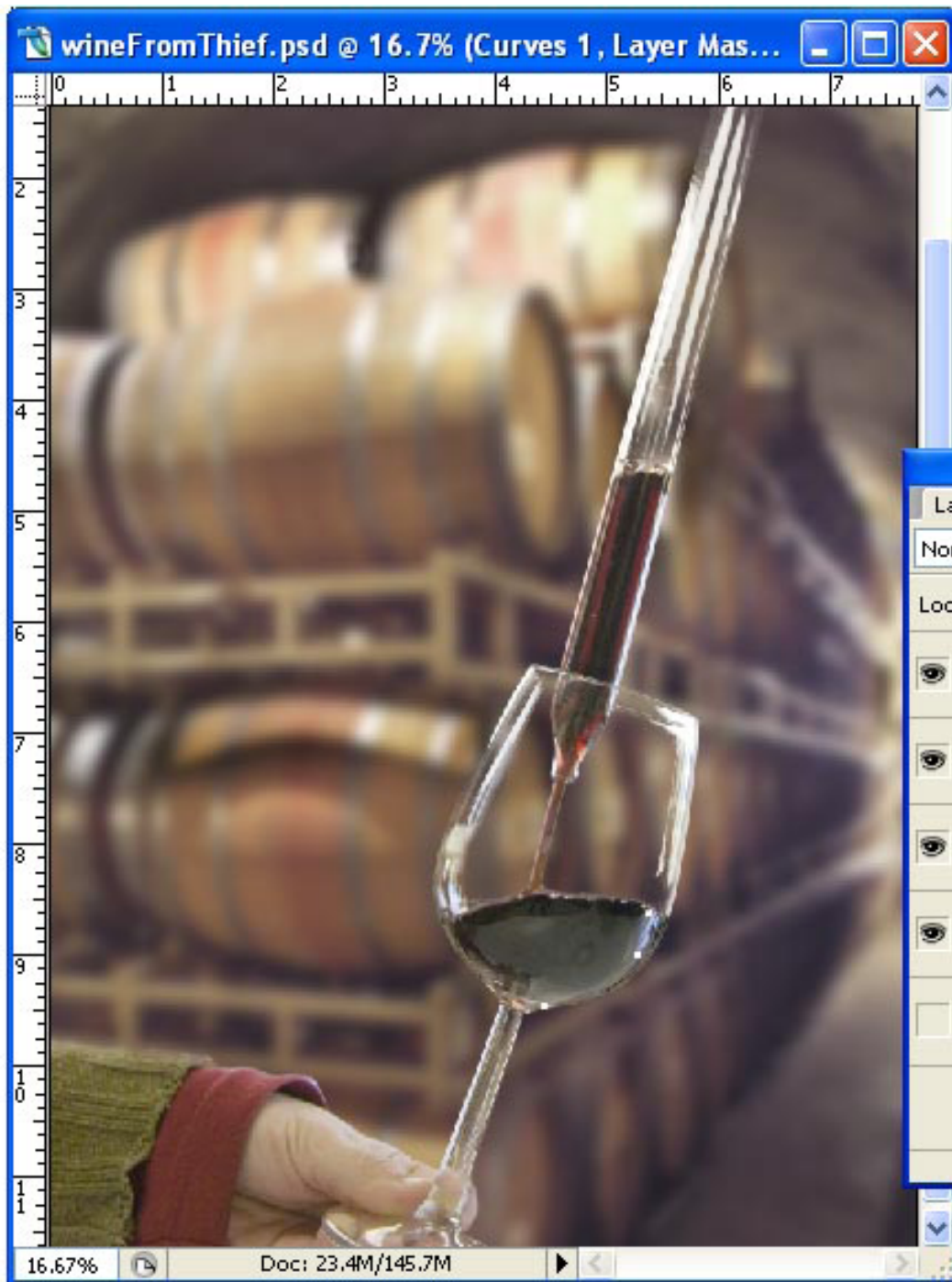


At the bottom of my Layers palette, I click on the **Add Layer Mask** icon (the circle inside of a square), and **WOW!** I can see my strange-colored fill layer behind my subject!

Notice that your image layer now has a mask icon next to it. If you look closely, you can see that it has black in the areas you've chosen to hide. Be sure the mask is highlighted

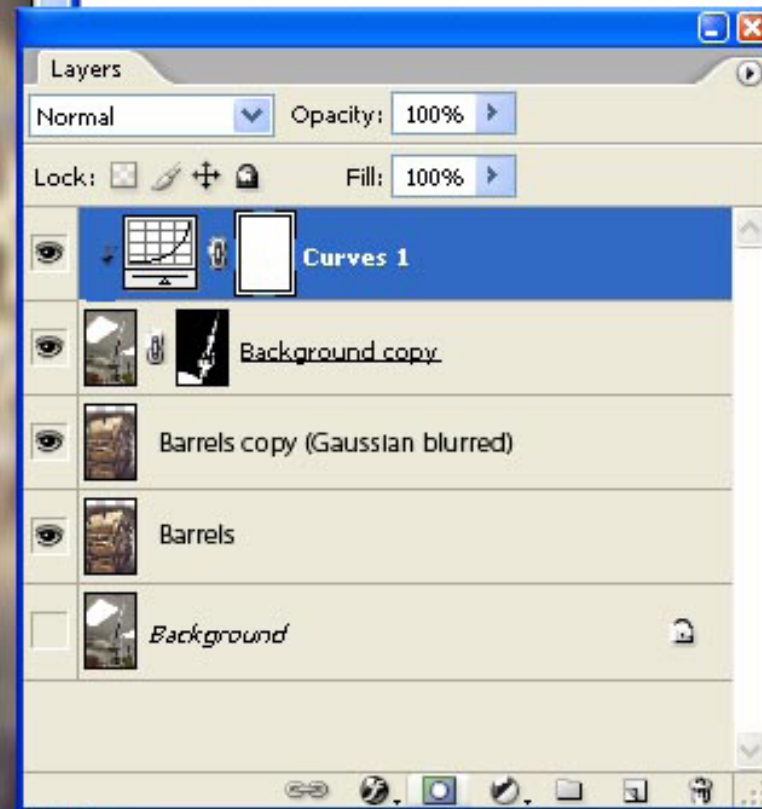


by a narrow black frame and press your "d" key to get your Default colors of black as the foreground color and white as your background color. Now you can paint on the image, and as you paint, you'll selectively hide the remaining parts of the image... just the parts you want to hide. Make a mistake? Press "x" to trade fore and background colors and paint on the mask (the image, but with the mask thumbnail selected) to bring visibility back. Want to partially erase part of it? Use a low opacity brush. Grey will let the image show through only a limited amount.



Now open the photo you want to use as your background image. Over a year ago I took a photo of the barrels in our caves at Rutherford Hill Winery. I flatten that image into one layer and drag that layer into the image I'm working on (use the Move Tool at the top right of your Tool Bar). Close the image file you used for the background **without saving it**.

I copy this new background "Barrels" layer so I have a sharply focussed one in case I mess up. With the copy layer selected, I go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur (or better yet, Lens blur if your version of Photoshop has this).



I wanted to lighten the Background copy layer, so I made a Curves adjustment layer and held Alt/Option while clicking the border between **Curves 1** and **Background copy** and that made the Curves layer affect only the layer directly beneath it.

A "wine thief," by the way, is that glass instrument which has drawn wine from a barrel and is pouring it into the wine glass.