SIMULATING MATTED PRINTS

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The lion's share of presentations and portfolios is built around matted prints. Their "look" is professional and finished. Mats can all be standardized for an overall portfolio style or customized for each print to best show it off. But there are times when it is not practical to use real mats such as when presenting photos in a printed book or even in a binder-style portfolio cover such as those with the multi-rings and plastic pages into which are inserted the prints to show. Mats add enormous weight to such a book and the pages become totally inflexible and often too thick for the covers.
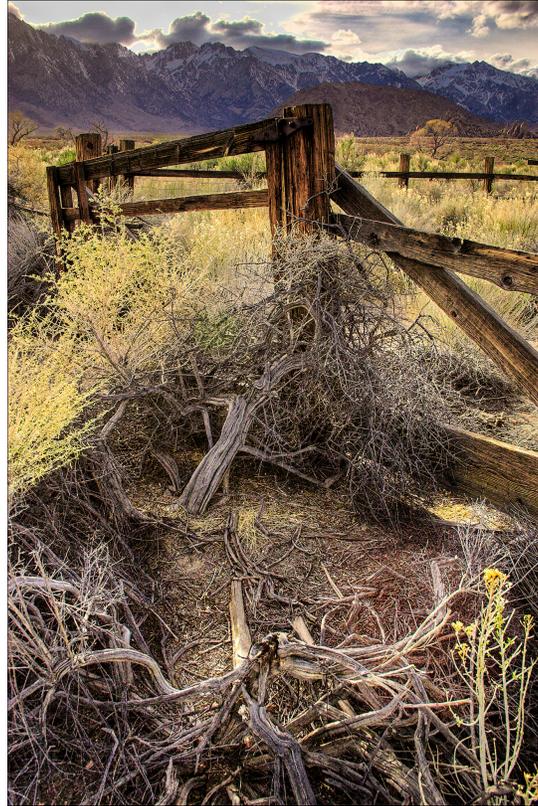
However, we're now in the digital age and of course there is a workable solution, which is to *simulate* the look of a matted print. This handout will show you how easy it is to accomplish it with a basic mat.

Of course it all starts with your selection of prints to include and with *your* decision, as the artist (YOU get to decide this, not some long dead photographer or teacher with their own ideas about it), as to what type of mat looks best. We will be showing you how to create the dimensional look of beveled mats, but there is no reason you need to go that far: you could simply add colored borders by not using the drop shadow and beveled affects covered in the instructions.

There are times when simply providing borders might be all that is necessary to take your print portfolio into a much improved league. The neat thing about digital is you can easily try several variations before selecting the final one.
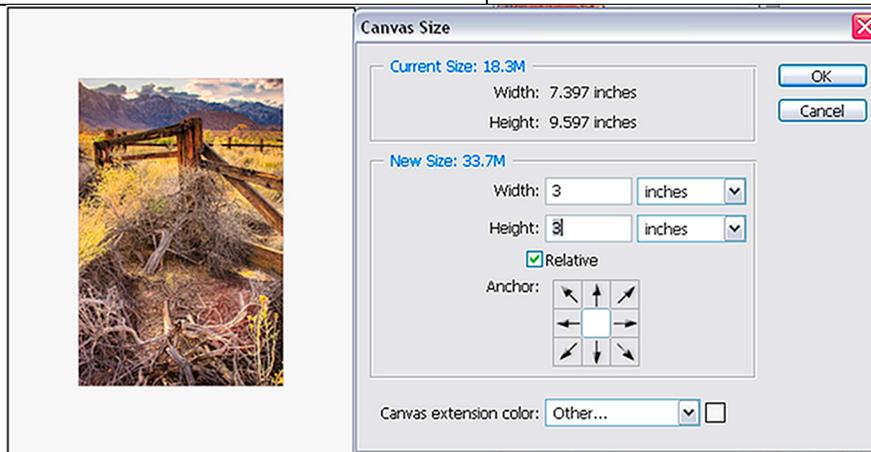
First select your image and size it AS IF it were going to be printed to be placed on a mat of the size you are simulating. For example, if you are going to be creating this simulated mat to go into an 11"x14" sleeve, then you would make the image size small enough to allow a properly sized 11x14 mat just as if you were REALLY going to mat it.

So here is our image ready to use:
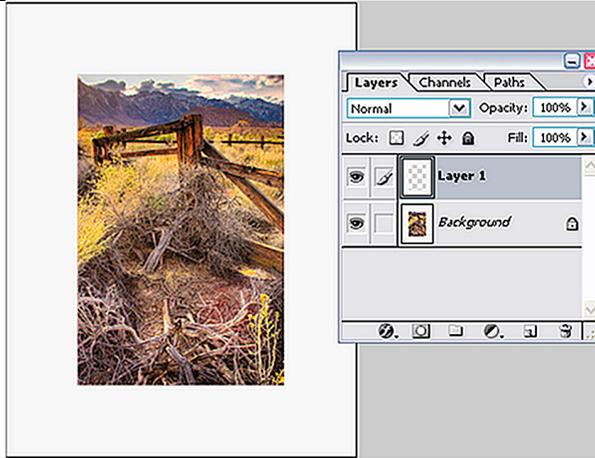
Now follow these steps to do some digital matting…

Step	Action	Result/Notes
1	Use **Image→Canvas Size** to create a canvas around the image that will be the size of the final mat.	Here we are starting with even borders and will add the proper bottom addition later. NOTE if you check the "**Relative**" box then any measurement you put in the **Width** and **Height** Fields will be added to the image size. With the Anchor block in the middle it will be added evenly in all directions.

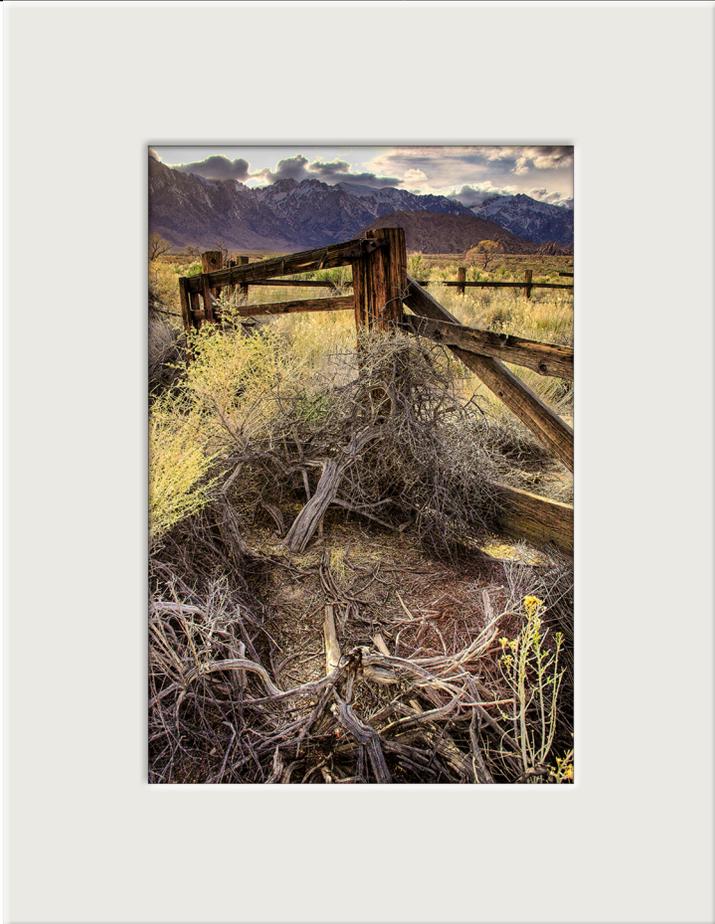| 2	Select the matted area.	Here I simply used the Color Range Selection (**Select→Color Range**).
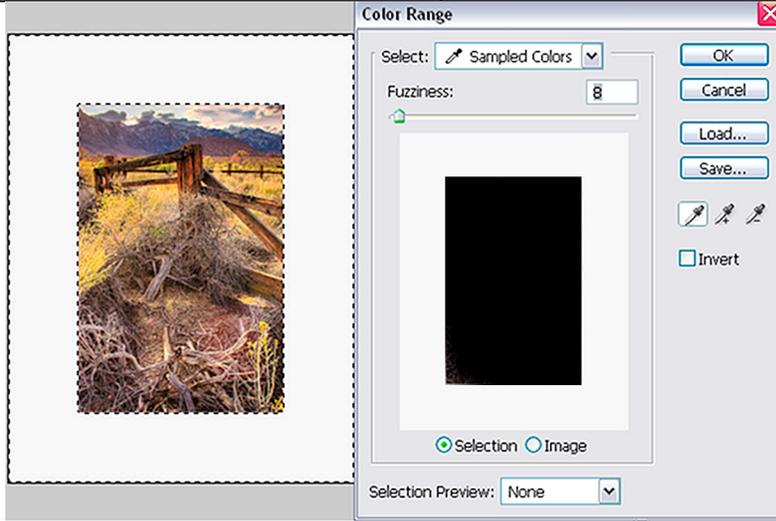
| 3	Copy and Paste the selected mat area. You can use the edit menu or Keyboard Short cut of `Ctrl` `C` then `Ctrl` `V`	When you paste the selection is puts it on a new layer containing only the selected area, in this case, the mat.

4	On this layer, use **Layer→Layer Style** to apply the following: 1. A drop shadow with light from about 11:00. Adjust opacity and spread/ distance to just barely indicate there is a shadow cast from the mat.	Note I have used a mat color just dark enough to show the highlights from the steps we are taking here. A pure white mat would only show shadows and no highlights.

|	2. A Bevel and Emboss. Make the opacity of the highlight be 100 and reduce the opacity of the shadow. Set the width so that it looks about like a 4-ply mat board.	When done with this step I flattened the layers or you could Stamp Visible and keep adding layers.

| 5	We're going to make a triple mat with a colored liner so the next step is the liner. Take the following actions A. Use a rectangular selection tool to select an area a little larger than the image area. B. Do **Select➜Invert** to now select the area that will be the liner mat color	The distance from the image edge to the rectangular selection will be how much of the first (light) mat will show around the picture.

	C. Copy and Paste this onto the image. This will create a new layer just as the first mat did.	
	D. Use the paint bucket tool to fill it with your desired color	I picked a color from the photo itself to bring out the blues on the mountains.
	E. Apply the drop shadow and bevel just as you did for the first mat.	Again, when completed I flattened the image.
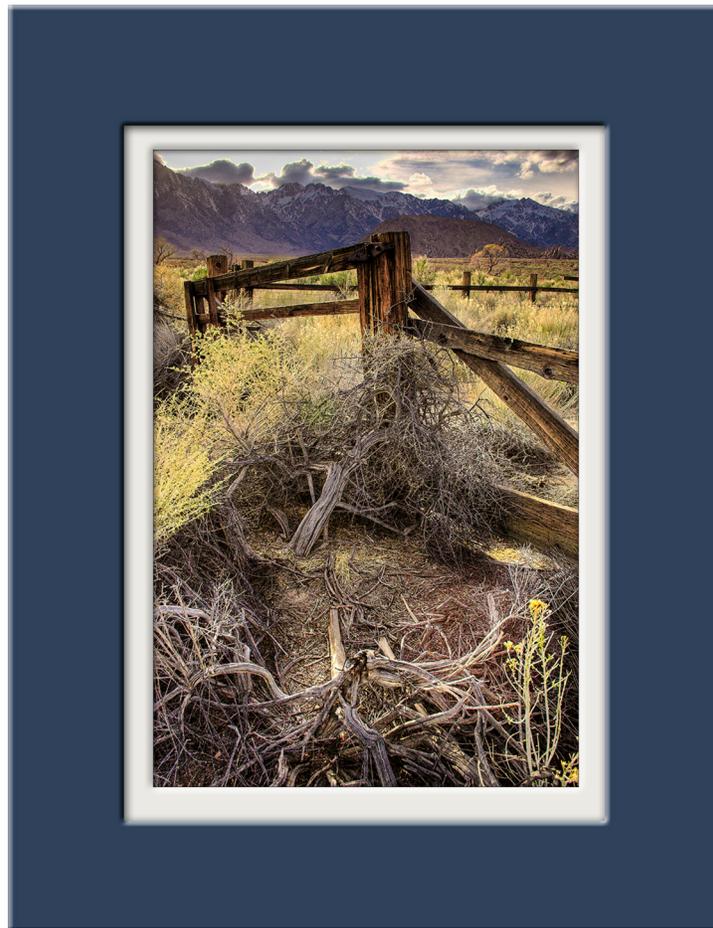
6	Now it is time for the final top mat. Repeat the steps you took for the colored mat but for this example I filled it with the same color I used for the inner mat.	When done, flatten the image again.
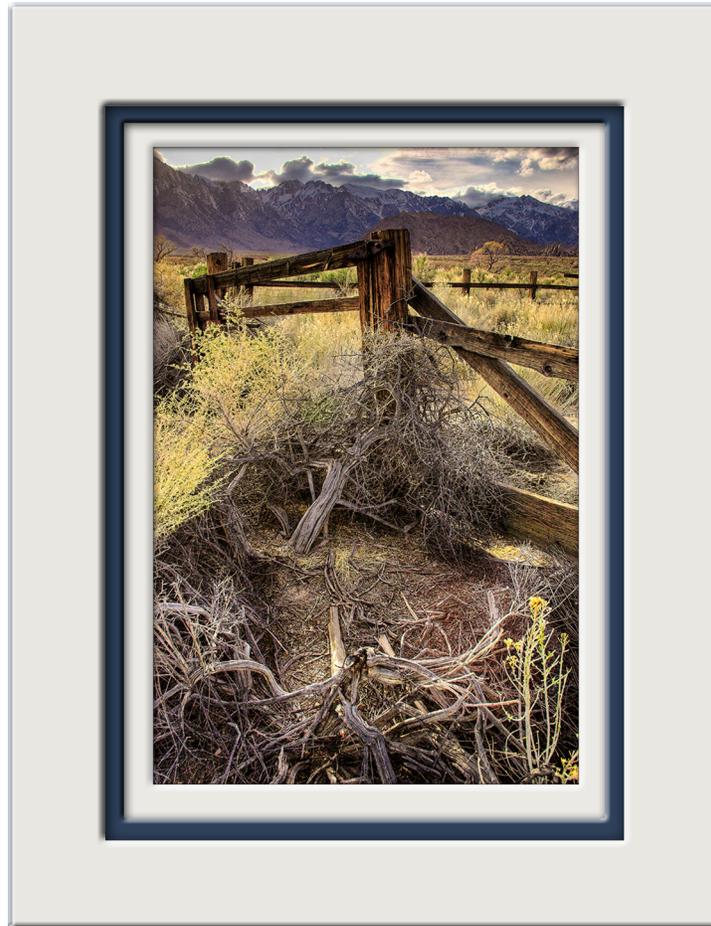
7	After flattening the image I cleaned the edges by simply painting them with the mat color.	
8.	Using the **Image➜Canvas Size** I added some area to the bottom using the outer mat's color for a properly proportioned mat.	
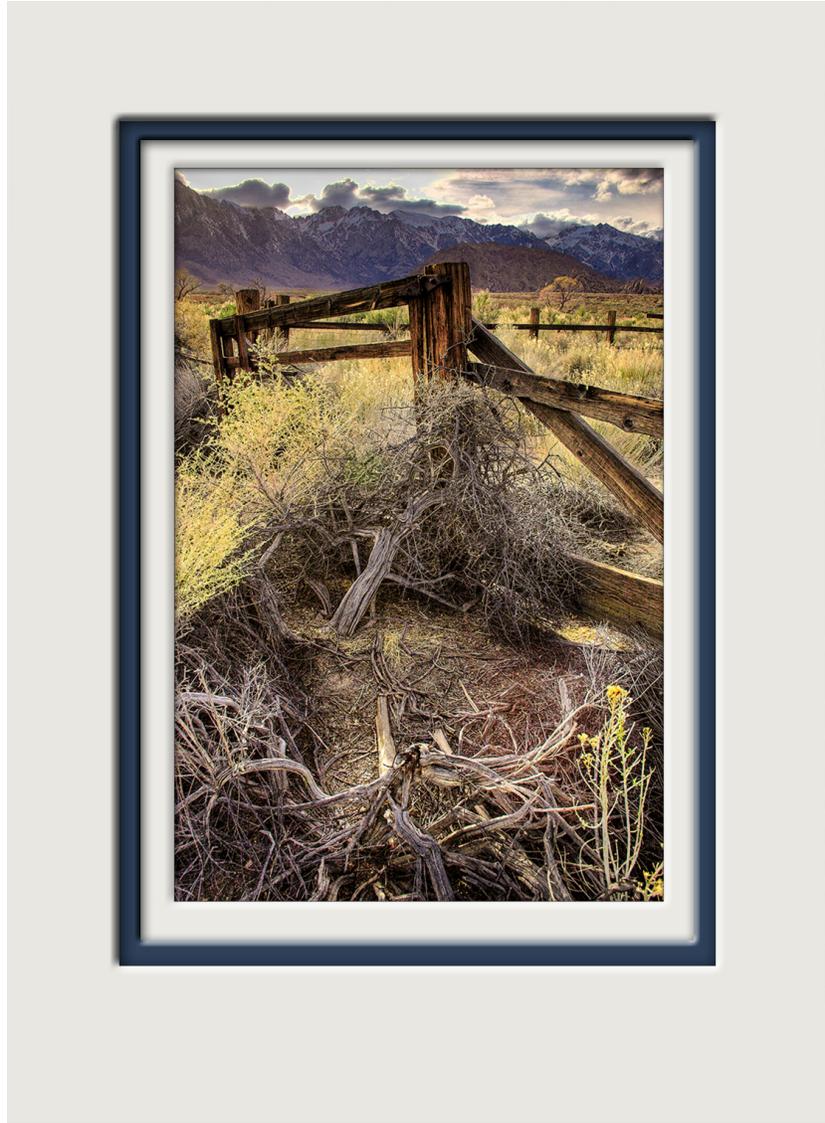
And that is all there is too it. You could also add a title and scanned signature or, in a commercial portfolio, add logo and contact information for you or your studio.

By adjusting the sizes, color(s) and dimensional effects you can simulate overmats (like this), window mats (where some of the photo paper shows to allow a signature on the print) or even a floating mat. You can even use textures to enhance the whole look.