



# Digital Colourization

Interested in the colourization process? So were we! We asked Mark Truelove, from *Canadian Colour* to provide us with a brief explanation of how digital colourization is done. Mark is the man behind the magic of the Vimy Foundation's *First World War in Colour* project. Read on to find out how he makes First World War photographs come to life:

"When I first receive a photo the first thing I look at is the overall quality of the image. Many First World War photos are damaged and need to be repaired. This may involve fixing scratches, removing dust particles or correcting for fading. Once that is done I use any description that comes with the photo to figure out the time of year it was taken and if a date is known I will look up the weather on that date, which will help me later with getting the lighting right.

If there are Canadian soldiers in the photo, I will use a variety of sources to find out details of their uniforms i.e. formation patches, cap colours, etc. There are some great resources online for those, but one of my best resources is a book called "Military Antiques and Collectables of the Great War - Canadian Collection" by J. Victor Taboika. For the tricky stuff, I am also fortunate to be able to ask Caitlin Bailey, Curator at the Canadian Centre for the Great War, for her expert opinion.



Once I am happy with the initial quality of the photo, I will start the colourization process. This is all done in Adobe Photoshop using a technique based on adding masked layers of colour. So, for instance, if I was adding colour to a Canadian Soldier, I would add a colour layer and then I add a mask to define where on the photo that colour is applied to. Each part of the body (face, hands, eyes etc.), each part of the uniform (jacket, cap, buttons, belt etc.) and the background has its own colour layer controlled by a mask to define where the colour is shown. The more objects/people in a photo, the larger number of layers are needed, and the longer it takes to mask those objects. Once everything is assigned a colour layer, I can choose how those layers interact with each other (if they intersect), change their opacities, and tweak the colours I have assigned to them."

Colourization is a complicated, time-consuming process, and as colourization gains popularity so too does the importance of the research into the details of the photo like those mentioned above. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of our colourist Mark Truelove, we have a better idea of what the First World War would have looked like to the people who lived it.

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Library and Archives Canada/PA-000549 (modified from the original)

Colourized for the first time by *Canadian Colour*