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00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:08,500

In 1877, Italian astronomer Giovanni Ciamparelli announced that he had found seemingly man-made

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00:00:08,500 --> 00:00:10,940

canals on the surface of Mars.

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00:00:10,940 --> 00:00:14,780

But by the 1920s, his startling discovery had been completely discredited.

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00:00:14,780 --> 00:00:20,940

Now, more than a century later, new high-powered telescopes are seeing the canals again.

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00:00:20,940 --> 00:00:26,780

In Florida, astronomer Don Parker is using photographic telescopes and computer enhancement

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00:00:26,780 --> 00:00:29,820

to create a provocative new look at Mars.

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00:00:29,820 --> 00:00:34,500

These images are generating a lot of controversy because of these features, which resemble

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00:00:34,500 --> 00:00:36,420

the so-called Martian canals.

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00:00:36,420 --> 00:00:38,980

This missed his bunk more than 50 years ago.

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00:00:38,980 --> 00:00:49,240

Don Parker, in some cases, has pushed the resolution on them by very strong processing

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00:00:49,240 --> 00:00:53,340

methods that you can do with these electronic pictures.

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00:00:53,340 --> 00:01:00,700

In some cases, lines have come out that look very much like the canals.

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00:01:00,700 --> 00:01:06,660

The belief that an elaborate system of canals exists on the surface of Mars began with Ciamparelli,

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00:01:06,660 --> 00:01:11,340

but was popularized by American astronomer Percival Lowell, who proposed a startling

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00:01:11,340 --> 00:01:16,460

theory about the creation of the Martian canals, and his observations made headlines.

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00:01:17,460 --> 00:01:24,620

Lowell was the major proponent of the idea that the canals might be artificially made

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00:01:24,620 --> 00:01:27,140

by intelligent beings.

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00:01:27,140 --> 00:01:33,380

And he spent a great deal of his time trying to sell this idea to both the scientific community

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00:01:33,380 --> 00:01:36,140

and the general public.

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00:01:36,140 --> 00:01:38,180

He thought that there were Martians.

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00:01:38,180 --> 00:01:43,220

For the past 30 years, astronomer Leonard Martin has been curator of the original observatory

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00:01:43,220 --> 00:01:46,020

built by Lowell in 1894.

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00:01:46,020 --> 00:01:50,540

In Flagstaff, Arizona.

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00:01:50,540 --> 00:01:55,820

Many of Lowell's original papers, sketches and calculations, are stored in this underground

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00:01:55,820 --> 00:01:56,820

vault.

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00:01:56,820 --> 00:02:02,900

This is one of Percival Lowell's original Mars log books that he used at the telescope.

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00:02:02,900 --> 00:02:08,220

And these are the original sketches that he made after his observations.

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00:02:08,220 --> 00:02:12,220

If you look closely on them, you can see what Lowell considered canals.

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00:02:12,220 --> 00:02:16,700

And these sketches then were transferred later on to these Mars globes, which were a real

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00:02:16,700 --> 00:02:20,820

treasure of Lowell Observatory.

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00:02:20,820 --> 00:02:25,740

As bigger and better telescopes were built and failed to capture Lowell's Martian canals,

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00:02:25,740 --> 00:02:27,660

his theory fell out of favor.

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00:02:27,660 --> 00:02:31,860

And when Mariner 9 took the first close-up pictures of Mars, it seemed that Lowell's

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00:02:31,860 --> 00:02:34,860

canals were gone forever.

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00:02:34,860 --> 00:02:37,860

Lowell was a keen observer.

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00:02:37,860 --> 00:02:44,020

However, he was straining his eyes to see these things that he thought he saw.

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00:02:44,020 --> 00:02:46,620

He pushed himself a little too far.

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00:02:46,620 --> 00:02:51,500

Nearly all modern astronomers reject Lowell's theory of artificially constructed canals

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00:02:51,500 --> 00:02:52,500

on Mars.

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00:02:52,500 --> 00:02:57,860

However, Percival Lowell's influence as a scientific pioneer, he still felt.

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00:02:57,860 --> 00:03:05,100

Well, I think that any search for life has to include Lowell as a player, because Lowell

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00:03:05,100 --> 00:03:10,380

created a lot of interest in the possibility of extraterrestrial life.

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00:03:10,380 --> 00:03:15,700

And so our search using SETI is part of that.

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00:03:15,700 --> 00:03:21,260

And certainly his influence is felt and always will be.

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00:03:21,260 --> 00:03:25,940

The Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona is open to the public year round and boasts

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00:03:25,940 --> 00:03:30,900

a brand new visitor center where everyone is welcome to explore the oldest observatory

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00:03:30,900 --> 00:03:31,580

in the West.