

Extraterrestrial DX Circa 1924: "Will We Talk to Mars in August?"

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ABSTRACT

Today, because of the various landings on Mars, the red planet is seen as a vast and probably lifeless desert. But in 1924 there was reason to believe that extensive vegetation, and perhaps even advanced life, existed on the red planet. Some even believed that Martian inhabitants would be far superior to human beings. Astronomer Percival Lowell had been the United States' foremost proponent of the existence of an advanced Martian civilization. In a series of writings Lowell claimed his telescopic observations had revealed, on especially clear nights, an intricate network of lines on the Martian surface. He hypothesized that these lines were a complex canal system, used to irrigate the dying planet with water drawn from the polar ice caps. Most other observers saw only vague shadings on a smudgy sphere, distorted by the Earth's atmospheric turbulence. But if Lowell's observations were correct, then an advanced civilization must have existed on Mars, and might still exist. Communication with these beings promised great scientific revelations.