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Papers on all aspects of astronomical history are considered, including studies that place the evolution of astronomy in political, economic and cultural contexts. Papers on astronomical heritage may deal with historic telescopes and observatories, conservation projects (including the conversion of historic observatories into museums of astronomy), and historical or industrial archaeological investigations of astronomical sites and buildings. All papers are refereed prior to publication. There are no page charges, and *in lieu* of reprints authors are sent a pdf or Word camera-ready version of their paper so that they can generate their own reprints on demand.

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COVER IMAGE

In 1877 Giovanni Virginio Schiaparelli drew detailed maps of Mars that had strange lines that looked artificial criss-crossing the Martian surface. He called these *canali* (channels), but the word was mistranslated in English as 'canals', which implied that they were made by intelligent beings. This view was explored further by Percival Lowell, a wealthy Boston astronomer, who purchased a 24-inch Alvan Clark refractor and installed it in a private observatory at Flagstaff, Arizona, primarily so that he could observe Mars. Lowell then mapped hundreds of these canals.

From 1896 until 1910, Lowell and Schiaparelli exchanged letters, mostly written in French and about Mars and its canals, and these are discussed and translated into English in a paper by Jennifer Putnam and William Sheehan on pages 170–227 in this issue of JAHH. This paper launches a new series in JAHH, titled 'From the Archives'. The images on the cover of this issue of JAHH were drawn from the aforementioned paper, and show Lowell (top) and Schiaparelli (bottom), Lowell supposedly observing with his Clark telescope (though this may actually be a staged photograph), and three of Lowell's colourful disk drawings of the 'Red planet'.