Germain Sommeiler Encyclopedia Article

Germain Sommeiler

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Germain Sommeiler

1815-1871

French engineer who designed and built the first major railway tunnel. The Mount Cenis Tunnel (completed in 1870), which passed through a section of the Alps, was the first significant tunnel to be built for the purpose of train traffic. In building it, Sommeiler set the stage for future tunnels that would carry car and truck traffic not only through mountains, but beneath rivers and, eventually, beneath the English Channel.