



# **Emile and Isaac Pereire: Bankers, Socialists and Sephardic Jews in nineteenth-century France (Studies in Modern French History MUP)**

*Helen M. Davies*

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Emile (1800-75) and Isaac Pereire (1806-80) were pivotal and sensational figures, their lives and careers a lens through which to re-examine the history of France in the nineteenth century. They were among the first generation of Jews emancipated by the French Revolution. Significant Saint-Simonians, they contributed to its philosophy of financial and economic reform. They were among the first to implement the new rail technology in France and their Saint-Simonian understanding that major railway development required investment capital on an unprecedented scale saw them launch the first investment bank of any size in Europe, the Crédit Mobilier. This became the holding company for a series of significant enterprises in which it had major investments. The Pereires came to stand behind banks and railways throughout Europe and in the Ottoman Empire and were integral to Napoleon III's foreign as well as domestic policies, major players in France's industrialisation and the modernisation of its banking system.

This is their first biography in English. Commencing with their early lives in the Sephardic community of Bordeaux, it follows their introduction to Saint-Simonianism in Restoration Paris, their early careers as railways entrepreneurs, and the dizzying heights they reached ultimately in Napoleon III's Second Empire. It is equally a social and cultural history of Jews in France, addressing the means through which the Pereires managed their business empire and the role played by family life in its success. It will appeal to teachers and students interested in French and Jewish history, and to the general reader of biography.

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