

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received DEC - 9 1983  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic EMPSON CANNERY

and/or common KUNER EMPSON CANNERY; THE CANNERY

2. Location

street & number 15 <sup>3rd</sup> Third Avenue n/a not for publication

city, town Longmont n/a vicinity of

state Colorado code 08 county Boulder code 013

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	n/a in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	n/a being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Cannery Developers; c/o Roger L. Pomainville, General Partner

street & number 655 Fourth Avenue

city, town Longmont n/a vicinity of state Colorado

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Boulder County Clerk and Recorder's Office

street & number 13th and Spruce

city, town Boulder state Colorado 80306

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Longmont Landmark Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date Ongoing  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Longmont Landmark Committee; Longmont Civic Center

city, town Longmont state Colorado

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Empson Cannery Warehouse is the dominant structure of what was once a group of buildings composing the cannery complex. Three tin sheds, which vary in age from twenty to thirty years and a foundation of another brick structure (demolished in 1978) also sit on the lot. However, only the warehouse is being nominated. The location is in the southeast section of the city of Longmont, Colorado. The general area is commercial and industrial to the south, east, and west of the cannery site, with an older residential neighborhood to the north. The warehouse is located on the southwest corner of Third Avenue and Martin Street.

The red brick warehouse is 72' x 327' and is actually composed of three separate buildings. The northern-most structure (approximately 72' x 150') was built about 1901. It is two-story with a 7' crawl space underneath. The exterior walls and those between the buildings are of 12" thick red solid bricks. The walls are three-wythe bearing walls extending approximately 28' in height. The roof is wood decking with metal finish and there is a roof-top monitor running approximately 107' the length of the roof. The monitor is about 9' wide with single pane glass window sides. There are two chimneys of brick construction. Windows are single pane, double hung casement with fixed sash.

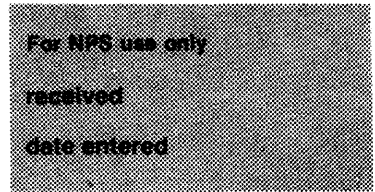
The middle section of the warehouse, constructed about 1907, is attached to the north section at the first and second floors, and at the roof line. It is of similar construction as the north building. It is about 100' long and 72' wide. It contains two main floors and an 8' high basement with half windows on both sides. The windows on the east side, lower level, are identical to those of the north section; the upper level windows on the east side are similar but not as high. The west side has no windows, but has two loading doors. There is a small loading door and dock on the east side. The monitor is 79' long and identical in design, material, and size as that on the north section. The roof is also similar (wood decking with metal finish) to the north section. The basement is about 4' to 5' below grade on both sides.

The south section of the warehouse was constructed about 1912. It is attached to the middle section at the same level on the roof line and on the upper floor. There is a 2 1/2' rise on the basement level. The basement is on grade level since the entire warehouse is on an incline rising to the north. This section is also of red solid brick, 12" walls similar to the other two sections. It is 72' wide and 76' long. There is a similar monitor about 62' long which is identical to those on the other two sections. The windows are quite different, particularly on the top level, than those in the other sections. On the main level, there are both single and double casement windows. At the basement level there is a large double door on each side which connects to each other through an interior hallway. The south side of the building shows a large metal addition attached to the main structure inside of which is a wooden porch with an entrance to the main level. There are several varying types and sizes of windows, though similar to others found on the warehouse.

There are two brick chimneys on the east side of the middle section, and one on the east side of the south section.

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The interior of the north section of the warehouse building is of two levels, and there is a 7' crawl space under the main level with a dirt floor. The main level was originally a large room (approximately 70' wide x 149' long), with a small office area located in the northeast corner. (There is now a retail space and two small offices in the northeast area with a separate wholesale and storage area adjacent.) The floor is two inch wood plank, and there are 9" x 9" solid wood beam supports, 2" x 12" joists (12" OC), 13' ceiling. The walls are natural unpainted solid red brick 12 inches thick. Along the south wall is a staircase to the upper level. The upper level is one big open room with 6" x 6" solid wood support beams, located 3 across with a center beam. The floor is 1" wood plank, 2" x 12" joists (12" OC), 13' from floor to ceiling support on the sides of the exterior wall, 18' to bottom of the skylight in the center, and 26' to the top of the skylights. There are windows on the north and west walls, and a large doorway opening on the south wall into the middle section top level structure.

The interior of the middle and south sections of the warehouse building is of three levels (basement, main floor, and top level). The basement area has a ceiling height of 10' with 2" x 12" joists. The middle section is approximately 98' long by 70' wide, 11" by 11" solid wood beam supports. There is an elevator shaft in the middle section with the elevator running to all three levels. The elevator is usually operative, though of questionable safety. Walls are concrete up to approximately 6' in height then solid brick. The floor is concrete. The south section basement is on grade level, 12" solid brick walls, and 11" x 11" solid wood support beams. This section's interior is approximately 75' x 70'. The ceiling is also 10' high with 2" x 12" joists. There are two side exits and the bottom of a staircase exit to the south.

The main level (first floor) of the middle building connects with the north building by a doorway opening. The northeast corner is an office area with a stairs to the basement. The main level is one open room with a 12' high ceiling with 2" x 12" joists. There is a ramp (2-1/2 foot rise) to the south section. That section has an 11' high ceiling and 9-1/2" x 9-1/2" wood support beams. There is a doorway on the south wall to a wood porch (under the metal addition), and a south exit into a boxed staircase. The floor is 1" wood plank in both sections. The walls in both sections are exposed brick with painting in some areas.

The top level of the middle and south section is similar to and connects with the north section. Both sections have skylights, ceiling heights, and a wood decking similar to the north section. The middle section has 8" x 8" support beams with an open center area and the elevator shaft. The entrance to the south section is on the same level as north and middle sections. This section only has center wood support beams (12" x 12"). The floor in both sections is 1" wood plank, and the walls are 12" solid brick which is mostly painted. The windows in the south section are larger and quite different from the other sections.

The warehouse structure itself is substantially as it was originally constructed. It had been used as the warehouse for the Empson (later Kuner-Empson) Cannery until December of 1970. Since that date, it has been used as a storage facility and warehouse, with the north portion of the main floor in the north section used as a commercial facility for a cheese shop.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1901; 1907; 1912      **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Empson Cannery Warehouse is important in symbolizing the Empson Cannery, an industry with a very significant economic impact on the town of Longmont and the region of northern Colorado. The Cannery became the single largest employer in Longmont at the turn-of-the-century and had a positive influence on the economy on the community for all eighty years of its life. John Howard Empson, founder and builder of the Cannery, was a pioneer in the canning industry and invented several patented devices for the pea canning process.

The history of the Empson Cannery is closely associated with the history of Longmont. Important to the success of the business was the founder of the Cannery, John Howard Empson (1849-1926). Empson came to Colorado from Cincinnati, Ohio in 1883, opening a canning store in Denver. Looking about for other areas of business with a future, he decided upon a canning factory to distribute the agricultural products of Colorado's fields and orchards. After spending a year in the mountains near Estes Park with the famous Enos Mills (founder of the Rocky Mountain National Park, naturalist, and writer) due to health problems, Empson moved to Longmont in 1887 and opened his first cannery under the name "J. Empson and Daughter" (later renamed the Kuner-Empson Cannery).<sup>1</sup>

In founding the cannery, Empson had convinced local residents to contribute \$1,000; thus, with their support, the original building at Third Avenue and Martin Street was constructed in 1889. On September 18, 1891, the Cannery, warehouse, and all the equipment was destroyed by fire. However, by this time, it was obvious to the community that the Cannery was the most important business in town; therefore, they encouraged Empson to remain in Longmont and rebuild. Empson did rebuild the cannery building west of the presently existing brick warehouse, which dates to 1901.

During the 1890s, Empson began to branch out--he bought farms in the Longmont area for production of vegetables; he embarked on a long and costly litigation with another company for pea podding equipment used by the Empson firm; he bought the Ft. Lupton Cannery in 1889; and developed a smaller, sweeter pea. By 1891, he had 350 acres leased to grow his peas, pumpkins and cabbage that he originally canned. On September 13, 1895, he was awarded a patent on a pea sheller; and in 1897, he patented a machine called a "viner" for separating peas from pods and vines. He had thirty-six of these machines operating in his plant by 1920.

By 1903, the Longmont plant employed 400 people and turned out 300 railroad cars of canned produce a year. Over 2500 acres were used for vegetable production. By 1905, he had 600 employees, and approximately 2,000 acres of his main crop, peas. In 1907, Empson added canneries in Loveland and Greeley. In 1920, when Empson sold the Longmont Cannery for a reported one million dollars to five prominent Longmont businessmen and bankers, the Longmont Cannery was thought to be the largest pea cannery in the world.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

(See continuation sheet)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .7 acres

Quadrangle name Longmont

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	3	4	9	2	0	9	0	4	4	4	5	6	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at the intersection of Third Avenue and Martin Street, the boundary extends west along the property line, on the south side of Third Avenue and extends 20' beyond the west wall; the line then extends south 350', or 20' beyond the south wall; extending east 95' to the east property line on the west side

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state n/a code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Roger L. Pomainville, General Partner of Owner

organization The Cannery Developers date May 23, 1983

street & number 655 Fourth Avenue telephone (303) 776-5812

city or town Longmont state Colorado 80501

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Barbara Sudler

title State Historic Preservation Officer date 12/7/83

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Delores Byers  
Keeper of the National Register

entered in the National Register date 1/5/84

Attest: date

Chief of Registration

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This group in turn was bought out by Max Kuner (known as a pioneer in the pickle industry) in 1927. The company was renamed "The Kuner-Empson" and merged with the Kuner Pickle Company of Denver. The Cannery continued in operation until December of 1970 at which time it was closed due to obsolescence and economics.

John Empson had other impacts upon the town of Longmont. He was a master at public relations, holding annual "Pea Parties" beginning in 1892, and sponsoring an annual "Pumpkin Pie Day" each fall for the first fifteen years or so of this century. Pumpkin Pie Days included a parade and serving of barbecued beef, pumpkin pie, (of course donated by Empson), and coffee in Thompson Park (one of three original city parks in Longmont). Crowds as large as 10,000 persons turned out for the event. He also had taken many world wide trips, and collected many artifacts which are now located in the Longmont Pioneer Museum. He died on October 10th, 1926, and his daughter died at age 80, in a Longmont hospital in 1956. There are no descendants of either. However, Empson's legacy lives on in Longmont. A bequest by him to the Longmont Public Library has provided them with about \$1,000 worth of research and reference materials every year since 1926 to the present.

The building nominated symbolizes the cannery in that it was the final step in the production process; its prominence in location has identified the building to locals with the cannery itself. It was the single largest structure in the complex and dominated the site. In entering Longmont from the east, the warehouse was pre-eminent from that approach the city and for over eighty years has been symbolic of the cannery itself.

<sup>1</sup>Because it was one of the first "and Daughter" combinations, the business received vast amounts of free publicity in newspapers and trade journals.

Another example of Empson's flare for showmanship, as well as his inventiveness, was his method of publicizing his new product, currant jelly. Forsaking traditional copper kettles, Empson decided that only silver was worthy of such a process in the state, designated the "Silver Queen of the West." It took 4,000 silver dollars, remelted, to make the kettle 4 feet in diameter and 4 feet high. All the decorations and even the nuts and bolts for pipe connections were plated with silver. When it was completed, the kettle was mounted and placed on a private railroad car for a trans-continental tour. It was exhibited at the finest stores in New York, Cincinnati and Chicago before being returned to Longmont. The kettle was placed in the Colorado State Museum in Denver for display in 1964, and is now located at the Kuner-Empson Cannery in Brighton, Colorado. This publicity stunt turned the food packing industry upside down in 1892, and Empson was proclaimed the "Pea King."

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Verbal Boundary Description and Justification (continued)

of Martin Street; then extends north 350' along the property line on the west side of Martin Street to the point of beginning. (See Map 3)