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ARCHEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT OF CULTURAL
RESOURCES WITHIN THE UNIMARK PLASTICS INC. TRACT,
AIKEN AIRPORT INDUSTRIAL PARK, AIKEN COUNTY,
SOUTH CAROLINA

by

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Prepared by the
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On April 1, 1976 an archeological reconnaissance was undertaken to locate and evaluate cultural resources in an 8.16 acre tract owned by Unimark Plastics Inc. This tract is situated within the Aiken Airport Industrial Park, located between the Aiken Municipal Airport and Interstate Highway 20. Physiographically, the Industrial Park is located in the sand hills between Shaw Creek and the south fork of the Edisto River. Dairy Branch, an intermittent stream, bisects the Industrial Park and drains west into Shaw Creek. Elevation of the sand hills in this region ranges from 450 to 500 feet above mean sea level. These hills are structurally composed of upper cretaceous marine sands of the Tuscaloosa Formation.

The Unimark Plastics tract consists of a single sand hill crest with an elevation of 480 feet above mean sea level which slopes north to Dairy Branch at an elevation of 455 feet. Another slope rises north from the stream bottom to an elevation of 460 feet at which point the northern property line is located. The stream channel of Dairy Branch is poorly defined, in some places non-existent. Vegetation seen in the stream bottom did not differ from that found on the hill slopes and hill top. Topography of the hill top extending east, west, and south to the property lines is fairly level with only a five foot drop in elevation from the crest of the hill.

Vegetation on the Unimark Plastics tract consisted predominately of 10 to 15 foot high scrub oak with scattered long leaf pines. The overstory was sparsely distributed over the area in irregular patches. The understory was sparse or non-existent and consisted primarily of lichen and wire grass with an occasional prickly pear cactus. In many

places the ground surface was exposed and without cover, while the remaining areas contained a thin mantle of oak leaves, mast, lichen, and pine needles. In general, surface visibility for archeological purposes was excellent for wooded regions. Soil profiles were extremely shallow with only a thin veneer of illuviated white sand, slightly greyed by organic content, which covered the underlying Tuscaloosa sands. In many areas the bare red Tuscaloosa formation was exposed. This observation clearly indicated that cultural material should be restricted to the site surface or the shallow soil horizon which has a depth of not more than a few inches.

All exposed areas of the tract were inspected for cultural material. In addition, the loose ground cover was brushed away to facilitate inspection of the soil surface in numerous areas of the tract until a confident opinion of the archeological resources of the site could be reached. A dirt access road was noted between the hill crest and Dairy Branch extending in an east-west direction. The profiles of the road cuts were carefully inspected for archeological resources. Neither prehistoric or historic archeological materials were located despite the intensive investigation and excellent surface visibility of the site surface.

The remaining area within the Aiken Airport Industrial Park were briefly inspected for the purpose of evaluation the archeological resources within this development. The intensive inspection of the Unimark Plastics tract, together with the results of a previous intensive survey of the main road, gate areas, and waste disposal area of the Aiken Airport Industrial Park, indicated that a low density of sites was to be expected for this area. The most significant areas of possible

site locations such as hill tops and terraces along Dairy Branch were checked for archeological sites. Additionally, all disturbed or cleared areas including right-of-ways, fallow fields, and profiles along borrow pits were investigated. A few mid to late nineteenth century historic sherds were found widely scattered in an area northwest of a gas pipeline, but no associated structure or structural debris could be located. In addition, numerous instances of historic terracing and dyking activities were present in the tracts east of the Aiken waste treatment facility where an intermittent stream joins Dairy Branch from the south. This suggests a mid to late nineteenth century utilization of the area for agricultural purposes. The western portion of the Industrial Park particularly north of the Industrial Park road contained a more mature forest community, including hickories, oaks, and sweet gums, particularly in the lower lying areas adjacent to Dairy Branch. The understory was more extensive, and included succulents which were absent in the eastern area of the development. The channel of Dairy Branch in this area was more clearly defined and contained running water. Despite the more favorable environmental conditions in this portion of the Industrial Park, no prehistoric archeological sites could be located.

No archeological resources of sufficient scientific significance to warrant additional investigation for mitigation were recorded by the survey in either the Unimark Plastics tract or the remaining Industrial Park area. It is, therefore, suggested that the entire Industrial Park, and specifically the Unimark Plastics tract be cleared from any adverse impact to cultural resources.