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CLOUDBUSTING IN FULTON COUNTY:
A STUDY ON THE
OWNERSHIP OF WEATHER

On the afternoon of Saturday, August 22, 1964, David Fulk achieved an unusual distinction. At half past one, with the sky a blend of clouds and sun, Fulk rumbled into Big Cove Tannery, Fulton County, Pennsylvania, in a pickup truck, with big round fenders and curves all over. A generator for vaporizing silver iodide stood upright in the back. When he stepped out of the truck, Fulk, age twenty-five, became the first person in American history to be arrested for trying to change the weather.

David Fulk played a small role in one of the grandest schemes ever dreamed up for dominating nature. The will to control the weather stretches deep into the American past.¹ But weather modification, in its modern incarnation, dates from only 1946 when Vincent Schaefer, a self-trained chemist at General Electric who had dropped out of high school, produced snow artificially in an ordinary home freezer. Schaefer discovered that something as simple as dry ice could make some clouds precipitate. Later that year, Schaefer took off in a plane and headed east over the Hudson River in search of a cloud to test out his discovery. At fourteen thousand feet, he found one and seeded it with dry ice causing the cloud to produce a trail of snow. "This is history," exclaimed Schaefer's colleague, Irving Langmuir – himself a Nobel laureate in chemistry – as he rushed forth to greet him when he landed.²

This was history all right, but *cultural* history as much as any other kind. Weather modification had its roots in the most American of preoccupations: the success story. Without advanced educational degrees, without even a high school diploma, Vincent Schaefer, who worked his way up at G.E. from his start as a machinist, had discov-