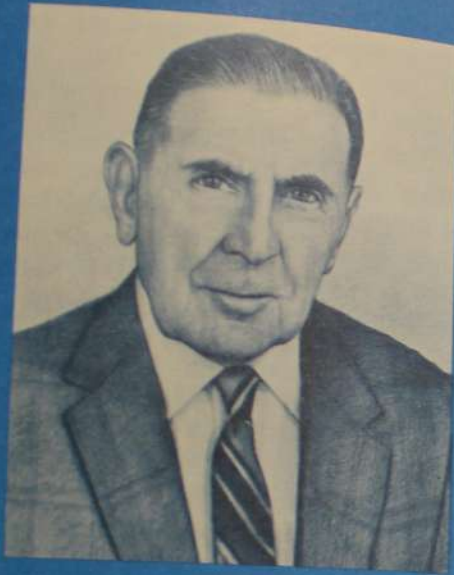


C. A. Carter  
President of Manila Cordage Company  
1958-1966



## 4 | Of Eastern Bazaars and New World Markets

In deciding upon the establishment of a rope mill in the Philippine Islands, the Tubbs management was primarily motivated by the desire to have a cordage plant whose products could be manufactured at a cost which would permit them to enter those world markets which were closed to Tubbs Cordage Company.<sup>1</sup>

Proximity to raw material sources, lower labor costs, a sound and forward-looking business policy represented the combined built-in and acquired advantages with which Manila Cordage Company was blessed from its inception. The Company, or *Manco*, as it is also known, put these assets to good use; first, serving the domestic needs; next, moving on to meet the demands of the larger markets without.

In 1918, by the end of World War I, the country's abaca harvest had reached 301,692 metric tons valued at ₱150,846,171.00 (or US\$75,432,085.50); an increase of 236,703 metric tons over the start of the 19th century's harvest of 64,989 metric tons. As for area planted to abaca, in 1918 this totalled 392,995 hectares compared to 1903's 214,862 hectares or an increase of 178,133.<sup>2</sup>



the Paco mill





(See Graph 3.) While other natural fibers such as sisal and maguey were used for cordage, the best ropes of the time were manufactured from abaca. And the increased production of this fiber could not but be of benefit to Manila Cordage Company.

The entry of new capital and the takeover by skilled workmen revitalized the small mill in Paco. However the impact of modernization was not to be obvious until some years after its acquisition. The mill's entire production for 1924 was 110,000 pounds (roughly 50,000 kilos) or 50 tons,<sup>3</sup> a far cry from the average monthly production of 75 tons that it would achieve in a few years' time; and certainly, worlds apart from the 636 tons of half a century later.<sup>4</sup>

But when the last snarls in production had been straightened out and the mill was running at full steam, the management turned its attention next to market development. Its first step was the recruitment of local distributors. Among the first to be signed up were J. Rodriguez, Inc., and Chua Kian. Like most of the rope traders then, Chua Kian was located in the Santo Cristo district of Manila's Chinatown. However, J. Rodriguez, Inc., whose appointment as distributor for Luzon was signed in December 1939, held office in Tuguegarao, Cagayan. Today these firms still distribute Manco products, thus holding the distinction of being among the oldest distributors of the Company. Chua Kian is still in Santo Cristo; but J. Rodriguez, Inc. has since moved to Paco in the vicinity of the old Manila Cordage mill.

After a distribution system for the home market had been set up, Howard Strickler took a trip to some neighboring countries in the latter part of the 1920's. Travelling by steamer, rail, rickshaw, car — by whatever available conveyance there was — he covered Java, Sumatra, and Celebes (of the present-day Indonesian republic), the Federated Malay States, the Straits Settlements, Siam (Thailand), French Indo China (the territories of Laos, Cambodia, and the Vietnams), and parts of the southwest coast of China.<sup>5</sup>

In places where he had friends, seeking out possible agents for Manila Cordage products was not too difficult. In others, he had to discover for himself the areas where rope traders congregated. Charles A. Carter, the third president of Manco, recalls that such

locales were pretty much like Manila's Chinatown and, therefore, fairly easy to identify. — At the end of the journey he had either set up agencies where none had hitherto existed or entered into contracts with already established traders. Among the first distributors for Manila Cordage rope and twine this side of the globe were Lindeteves-Stokvis for the Indonesian region; Guthrie & Company for the Straits Settlements, the Federated Malay States — with offices in Penang and Kuala Lumpur; International Engineering Co., later replaced by Heong Lik, for Thailand; Tsientsin-based Thoresen Shipping Company for the China trade, assisted by D.T. Lu in Shanghai, U Man Fat in Hongkong, and Siemssen whose territory was Shanghai and the outlying areas.<sup>6</sup>

In opening up the Eastern markets for Manila Cordage Company, Howard Strickler was inaugurating an export drive that was to help make a name for Manco ropes. He was also implementing a market strategy that would achieve for both Tubbs and Manila Cordage a foothold in markets previously inaccessible to Tubbs.

In 1929, returning to Manila from a visit to San Francisco, Strickler took the long route home. Before coming back to the Philippines, he practically retraced J.B. Havre's Central and South American trips in the late 1890's. During this journey "Strickler visited most of the same places Havre had visited; in many instances calling on men whose fathers or grandfathers had sold Tubbs Cordage Company's rope after being appointed as agents by Havre, and who now welcomed the opportunity to handle the products of Tubbs' Manila subsidiary."<sup>7</sup>

Although even before J.B. Havre's trip through the Americas as Tubbs' agent, Tubbs had sold an occasional rope in the area, it was not until after the former had organized dealers for Tubbs products that sales to South America improved. However, unionization of labor and higher wages, particularly after World War I, had made Tubbs rope uncompetitive by the second decade of the nineteenth century. "That business had always been cutthroat competition and Tubbs had to compete with European mills with lower wages" is how Charles Carter described the South American market. But Manila Cordage was another story. Fiber was readily accessible to the Company and wages here were lower than in the States. So



Manco products could compete where Tubbs' could not. And to serve Tubbs' old friends, Manila Cordage shipped directly to South and Central American customers rope and twine on consignment basis.<sup>8</sup> The markets of the New World – Central and South America and the West Indies – “proved to be a large and profitable outlet” for Manila Cordage Company.

In the thirties, Manila Cordage turned its attention to other potential foreign customers. This time the focus was on India and South Africa. On a visit to Bombay, Strickler contracted Mehta Modie & Co. to handle Manco products. However, there was little business for the Company in Calcutta and the eastern coast of India. But about the same period, drilling for water was big business in South Africa. And bids for rope needed for the drilling operations were solicited by the South Africans. Manila Cordage won some notable bids and established a fairly thriving business in Capetown, where its agent was Leonard Caro, and in Durban, where another Caro brother served Manco in the same way.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout this decade of searching for new markets to serve, orders from United States customers were growing too. In fact, the establishment of reciprocal free trade between the United States and the Philippines had led to a phenomenal increase in exports to the former, to the extent that it occasioned concern from some responsible Americans.

American importers took 79 percent of all Philippine exports in 1930, 87 percent in 1933, and 84 percent in 1934. These figures mean, . . . that . . . the United States completely dominates the insular import trade. It is a trade which has been developed solely for the American market, and its continued existence depends largely upon its ability to maintain a relatively free access to that market.

This astonishing growth, both in the volume of Philippine exports and in the percentages which have been sold in the American market, has created a situation which is basically unsound. First of all, the export trade is too highly concentrated in a few agricultural commodities. Four items – sugar, coconut products, tobacco products, and hemp – regularly account for more than 90 percent of all exports . . .<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, “American agricultural interests which felt themselves threatened, rightly or wrongly, by the steadily increasing volume of Philippine sugar, coconut oil and cordage entering the American market free of duty”<sup>11</sup> were also concerned about the situation, but for other reasons.

In 1934, the Tydings-McDuffie Act authorized the Filipinos to “elect a constitutional convention and through it to frame the constitution of their future republic. This constitution would not, however, take effect in its entirety until the grant of complete independence in 1946.”<sup>12</sup>

Upon the completion and adoption of the Constitution (1935), a self governing Commonwealth was established. The United States however, retained “certain sovereign powers, such as control over foreign policy, and responsibilities, such as that of defending the territory against external attack.”<sup>13</sup> And for the duration of the transition period, duties were imposed on Philippine products entering the United States on a graduated scale: quotas were imposed on Philippine sugar and cordage shipments. From 1935 through 1946 and on to July 1974 (the Laurel-Langley Agreement had extended the quota beyond 1946) the amount of cordage that may be exported to the United States was fixed at 6 million pounds a year, which amount initially was distributed equally between Elizalde Rope Factory; Johnson Pickett Rope Co.; and Manila Cordage Company. Manco's allocation was subsequently increased to 2.5 million pounds in the late 1950's. (See n. 3, Chapter 5.)

Alongside the flurry of new export activities, there was a whirl of excitement brought about by other factors more social in character. In a sense, a new era had begun for Manila Cordage. In 1935, the first lady employee joined the staff. Elizabeth Schleipen, recalling that occasion observed:

My arrival at MANCO was actually a historical event, as the Company had hitherto never had female office personnel. The event also called for an architectural innovation – a lady's restroom had to be provided for.<sup>14</sup>

Offices with a similar experience can well appreciate the significance of such an event, for in those days, Manila Cordage Compa-



ny was an all-male enclave; the plant, deceptively barn-like amidst what might have passed to the uninitiated as a bucolic setting in the heart of a growing city. Miss Schleipen remembers that in April 1935 when she arrived at

the V-shaped corner of Cristobal and Otis, no office building was visible. What could be seen was a large area that looked like a Bureau of Plant Industry experimental station, planted to large and small trees, which I later discovered to be various large and small fruit trees, abaca plants, maguey plants, agave, etc. In other words, it actually was a kind of experimental project. There also was a beautiful, big black and white cow, peacefully grazing among the trees. In the distance, there were quite a number of large buildings of concrete and galvanized iron, which were obviously warehouse and factory buildings. A short distance down Cristobal Street there was a gate and upon entering it, one stood within the Manila Cordage Company compound. To reach the Office, one walked on toward the estero, until one reached another one of the large warehouse-like buildings. It was open at one end, which served as a drive-in garage for the Company's one delivery truck and for the three private cars of the executives. One continued along the side of the building on a narrow cement walk. Bordering this, was a beautiful piece of green lawn stretching to the banks of the estero, and beyond the lawn, building after building comprising the different parts of the factory. Finally, at the rear end of the building, nearest the estero, at the end of the cement walk, were two doors, leading into two rooms which comprised the Office of Manila Cordage Company. Doors and windows were covered with mosquito wire to keep out the tiny copra bugs which swarmed over from Philippine Refining Company's copra stocks. One room accommodated the President and General Manager, the Secretary, the Sales Department, the Shipping Department and the private secretary, a total of five persons. The second room was the bookkeeping department. The Mill Office was located in a long narrow room partitioned off inside the front of the main factory building. — Ventilation or cool air was provided by ceiling fans.<sup>15</sup>

That same year, a new development affected Manco's export shipping procedures. This was the inauguration of air mail service to the United States. "In November 1935 the first American 'Clipper' arrived in Manila, commencing air mail service to the United States, and it was not long before air mail service was avail-

able to the rest of the world."<sup>16</sup> Prior to this period, Elizabeth Schleipen remembers that

Loading of foreign orders was done by *cascos* — those giant "bancas" with curved *sawali* roofs. The *estero* at that time was quite deep, also comparatively clean, and the navigators did not have too much difficulty pushing their craft up the *estero* with their bamboo poles. We in the office could watch the loading from our desks, and it was very convenient for the shipping department to control operations.

There was no such thing as foreign air mail. When we had rope going out to foreign countries, everybody had to pitch in and work overtime, even into the night, to get shipping papers and covering letters ready, so they could go in the ship's box, thus accompanying the rope shipments. During the day, everyone was rushing around to Customs and the Banks; fortunately, documentation, etc., were simpler in those days, and somehow people were more accommodating. For those who had to be at the piers far into the night, there were midnight snacks at the Port Area eateries. The boys did not seem to mind the extra work or unusual hours — it was an all for one and one for all attitude and finally the satisfied feeling of "mission accomplished."<sup>17</sup>

But once air service had become a way of life, "there was no longer the necessity of having to rush the preparation of shipping papers to catch the ship's box."<sup>18</sup>





## 5 | Through the Eye of the Storm

On December 7, 1941 (it was December 8 in the Philippines), the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, heralding the start of hostilities in the Pacific. Almost simultaneously, they raided Clark Airfield in Luzon and enmeshed this country for the first time in the complexities and the rigors of modern global warfare.

As in the past where the history of men and nations have been shaped by the interaction between them, World War II provided the backdrop against which the lives of people were played out. — For the men of Manila Cordage Company, reality was the plant takeover by the Japanese Imperial Army on January 2, 1942. Vicente Fernandez, who retired in May 1974 after 38 years of service at Manco, remembers that Earl Green's parting words to them before he, Howard P. Strickler, and Charles A. Carter were brought to a concentration camp by the Japanese were: "Take care of the mill, men." A number of them took Green's message to heart. Overcoming fear and swallowing pride, they reported for work.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the Occupation the mill was operated as "a branch of the Tokyo Imperial Rope Works."<sup>2</sup> But no matter this. As far as Fernandez and some of his colleagues were concerned, were it



not for the fact that Manco employees helped run the mill, the Japanese would have dismantled the plant machinery as they did in the nearby Johnson Picket mill,<sup>1</sup> perhaps bringing about the "oblivion" of Manila Cordage Company.

Fernandez was probably partly right. For during the three year period that the Japanese occupied Manila, the American management group — Strickler, Carter, and Green — together with other American internees remained quartered as civilian prisoners of war in the main building of the University of Santo Tomas (UST) compound. And the responsibility for the mill was left in the hands of their subordinates. Their dilemma was whether to cooperate and perhaps be labelled "traitor" or not to cooperate and abandon the mill.

On the other hand, quite apart from these considerations, there were other possibilities regarding the future of the mill. The Japanese could simply have sabotaged the whole plant: picking at will what would have been of use to them — machine parts, fiber, finished products, and the like. Or the mill could have been reduced to rubble by bombing, fire, explosives. Looking around the Otis-Cristobal junction in 1945, observing the destruction and ruin about, one would have known that these other possibilities were not as farfetched as they might seem today.

But none of these things happened. When the war was over, the mill was still standing.

Early in February 1945, Manila was liberated. Advance troops of the United States First Cavalry Division gained entry to the city and sped towards the University of Santo Tomas late in the afternoon of February 3. The troops' immediate objective was the liberation of internees in the university compound, where, as strong rumor had it, the detainees were marked for execution by their Japanese guards. For by this time, the Japanese troops in the city were preparing to pull out, and they may have thought of the internees as providing an opportunity for diversionary action against the enemy.

That first Saturday in February was exceptionally felicitous for the UST "boarders." After a brief gunfire exchange at the universi-

ty gates, the camp was liberated. Back among free men that day were Manila Cordage Company's Howard P. Strickler, Charles A. Carter, Earl Green, and their families.

Their euphoria, however, was shortlived. Manila's south side, linked by bridges to the now free section, north of the Pasig, was put to the torch by retreating Japanese soldiers who slew innocent civilians in their wake and blew up bridges in a senseless and futile effort to stem the tide of war. Resistance groups set up battle stations in buildings determined to delay rescuing forces. Fire and fear ravaged the city. But after three years of waiting for freedom, the battle for Manila seemed remarkably brief.

By the third week of February and by the courtesy of the American Red Cross, Tubbs and Manco men had successfully communicated with one another. During their stay at the University of Santo Tomas concentration camp, the detainees had written letters in the hope that some of these would eventually reach home. Similarly, the men at Tubbs had sent letters and gift packages to the Philippines even in the absence of guarantees that these would reach their destinations. Of these, only a few got through. Now, the long period of isolation was over.

After the smoke of battle had cleared, and the survivors could attend once more to the business of living, they began to concern themselves with more prosaic daily needs. Even as the Red Cross was arranging for transportation home to the States of the internees, giving priority to the ill and the weak among them, Manila Cordage's management was already eager to do what could be done to put the mill back into operation. Having convinced themselves that the war was truly over for them, Strickler, Carter, and Green, were once again active with plans for Manila Cordage. Before February was out, except for Carter who was recuperating from a bad case of malnutrition in a field hospital and hardly able to move, Strickler and Green, as soon as able, had walked from UST (which was still home for many of the internees) to Cristobal Street — a distance of about 4 miles — to get their first look at the mill. In effect, they conducted an inspection tour, the first since their confinement and release.



In those days, the only vehicles allocated gasoline rations belonged to the military. Most people went around on foot. So did Strickler and Green. — As the men approached the Otis-Cristobal area, they must have been confronted by burnt-out building shells, rubble, and masses of twisted steel. The Philippine Refining Company and the Manila Gas tank were gone. Neighboring warehouses were destroyed. But amidst the destruction, the Manila Cordage mill still stood. And at first glance, except for the hemp bodega which had burnt down, it must have seemed as if there had been no major loss for Manco.

Inside the mill, the condition of the machinery was far from satisfactory. The Japanese had used the machinery to exhaustion, with little or no preventive maintenance or repair work done during the three years they were running Manco. The machines seemed to require almost all the repair parts a rope mill could need. And as Earl Green went through the Preparation and Laying machines, he noted down the items that needed either replacement parts, repair work, or both.

In subsequent communications with Tubbs, detailed descriptions of the mill's status were sent. For the moment, it seemed enough to know that there was still a mill where most everything else had been reduced to ashes.

Meanwhile, back in San Francisco, Tubbs was equally busy preparing for the return to the States of its Manila men. And in order to sooner relieve Strickler and Green who between them had decided they would stay behind a little longer (while their families and the Carters would go home ahead) until Tubbs could send one or two of its men to help speed up the rehabilitation of Manco, the Tubbs management tried to work out plane transportation for those most suited to supervise the reconstruction of the Paco mill. Through it all, Tubbs' foremost concern was the recuperation of its Manila staff. But since men and materials for the war efforts had prior claims on transport facilities, it was not easy to book anyone or anything that had no immediate connection with these efforts.

It is never easy for active men to have to live in enforced idleness. And three years of confinement did not make it any less

difficult for the Manco management group. Thus, shortly after their release from concentration camp, getting the mill operational became a primary objective of the group. But from February through May, the lack of progress in this direction was most disheartening to all concerned.

Both the United States Army and Navy needed rope; officers of these branches of the armed forces had approached Strickler with their requirements. Washington expressed interest in Manila Cordage manufacturing rope for the armed forces. Manco was more than willing to cooperate. But first, it had to repair the existing machinery, acquire power (perhaps through a generator until the Manila Electric Company could restore power to the city) and fiber.

Under normal conditions, the materials needed to rehabilitate the mill would have been fairly easy to get. But though Manila was free, the war was still going on elsewhere. And the constraints on movement and supplies were overwhelming. Having managed to communicate the mill's needs to one set of armed forces' representatives, Strickler would find to his great disappointment, that the representatives and their units would soon be transferred elsewhere; and that he would have to go through the same routine again, but with a different set of officers. The red tape and the slow-moving channels of communication were a source of tension that was not conducive at all to a speedy recuperation. Finally, Tubbs Vice President Frank McCann, T. Humber Fotheringham of the Seattle plant, Asst. Mechanic Irving Wernecke of the San Francisco mill, and Edward J. Silva of the San Francisco office were cleared for travel to the Philippines, arriving in Manila about the end of May 1945. These men were to provide Manila Cordage Company with an interim management team. And except for McCann who left for home ahead of the group and Silva who left last the following April, the rest stayed on until March.

On June 9, Strickler left for the States for a much needed rest. (Carter was already there, having left Manila in April.) Earl Green stayed behind a while longer for a smooth transition and to help the new arrivals put the mill in order. For with the impending delivery of much-needed machine parts, full-scale rehabilitation work



could begin in earnest. However, to put the mill in order meant first clearing up the congestion brought about by men, machines, and supplies crowding together in a limited area. For in addition to the salvageable mill equipment and materials, American Red Cross personnel and supplies were also temporarily sharing the facilities. Since late March, they had been occupying the office building and had spilled out from there into the balance of the mill. Office quarters and warehouse space being almost unattainable in the city, the Red Cross could not easily vacate the premises. In fact, it stayed on till early 1946. But by the latter part of June, the mill itself was relatively clear of Red Cross supplies and McCann could report to Tubbs that Manila Cordage Company had a contract to supply the US Army with rope, with the latter providing the fiber. At the time, fiber was a scarce commodity. In certain abaca-growing regions, such as Davao, fighting was still going on. Elsewhere, as in Leyte, the people were just not interested in stripping fiber from the plants for money, as there were no consumer goods on which they could spend the cash.

By mid-August, it was McCann's turn to receive progress reports from Manila. For by then both he and Green were back in the United States. Among the first items communicated to him was the fact that on the first of August, Manila Cordage Company had begun operations. The mill's first post-war Report on Operations indicated that from August 1 to August 11 inclusive, total rope manufactured amounted to 44,435 lbs.

From August to the end of March 1946, Manco's finished goods were exclusively for army use. And as the last contract rope came off the machines, the first fiber for commercial production was put over the breaker. (See Annex B for cordage manufacture diagram.) This was an event of some significance for it marked the end of Manila Cordage Company's active involvement in the war effort and signalled the beginning of post-war commercial operations.

Already in Manila as this transition took place were Carter and Herman D. Nichols. Shortly after their arrival in late February, the relief team of Fotheringham and Wernecke had turned over the reins of management to them. And since Nichols stayed on until

the return of Strickler and Green later in the year, he helped supervise the completion of Manco's army commitments. He also was to witness the first labor disruption in Manila Cordage.

That first year following the liberation of the Philippines was demanding and hectic. It was the last year of the Commonwealth. The country's immediate tasks were reconstruction and rehabilitation. One of its urgent concerns was the building up of a viable economy in keeping with its status as a sovereign nation.

In his "Message on the State of the Nation to the Second Congress," newly-elected President Manuel A. Roxas described the sad condition of the Philippine economy at the conclusion of the war:

... the central fact of our economic condition is the tragic destruction of the productive economy. Sugar, hemp, copra, coconut oil, cigars, tobacco, minerals and lumber — these were once the staples which we exported overseas. Today 60 percent of our sugar mills are destroyed; most of the others are in complete disrepair. Machinery has been broken, stolen or rusted away. Most of the lands themselves lie fallow.<sup>4</sup>

Against the background of a troubled economy, a scarcity of basic commodities, and a minimum of resources, the country buckled down to restore itself to health. So did Manila Cordage Company. But like the country, it too had to fend with inflation, limited raw materials, and unsatisfied expectations. In June 1946, about the same time that President Roxas was outlining for Congress the priorities of government, the first labor dispute in the history of Manila Cordage erupted into a strike. Not surprisingly, one of the issues, if not the main one, was union demand for higher wages.

In the second quarter of 1946 Manco had shifted its focus from the military to the commercial. The Company had just barely started gearing itself to meet its share of US cordage quota requirements and to serve the needs of fledgling domestic industries, when the strike broke out. It could not have been more ill-timed for the firm. However, it was not alone in this predicament for the early post-war period was one of upheaval and a season conducive to strikes.



For about three months, until the strike ended in late August, working out an agreement acceptable to all concerned involved long hours of bargaining and numerous meetings with Bureau of Labor conciliators. At one point, the Secretary of Labor himself tried to bring management and labor into agreement prior to certifying the case to the newly created Court of Industrial Relations. For many of the old timers, these were unfamiliar proceedings, and a source of much apprehension.

Even after the strikers returned to work that August, there was no real peace. Union leaders and their recruits continued to foment discord. The following April, there was another strike; again another in late August 1949.

In 1947, however, when the Court of Industrial Relations settled the April-May strike, it had enjoined the Union not to strike against Manila Cordage Company while the collective bargaining agreement remained in force. The agreement had stipulated the means by which any interim grievance that might arise could be settled. Since the 1949 walkout was in violation of the Court's ruling, the Court, therefore, ordered the dissolution of the union and empowered Manco to hire new workers at will. By early October, the mill was back in production.

For the next sixteen years, Manila Cordage would be blessed with an industrial harmony that would be unbroken by any strike.

As the country struggled to attain normalcy and the pressures for survival eased up, people gradually directed their attention to more peaceful pursuits — education, public works, commerce and trade, politics, and the like. Thus, with a fairly stable work force, a build up in raw materials, and customers to be won or wooed back to the fold, Manila Cordage began the slow process of rehabilitation.

Through force of circumstance, the home market had been neglected throughout the war. And with two other equally determined cordage mills vying for its favors, Manco could not afford to sit back and relax. It fought for this market just as it did for former customers abroad.

Among the earliest customers of Manila Cordage Company were those from Latin America. When news of the liberation of Manila reached them, they had communicated with Tubbs to extend their best wishes to the newly released Manco internees. (At the time the only available communication lines to Manila were those of the military and of the Red Cross.) On that occasion, they also expressed their hope of resuming business with Manila Cordage Company.

Aware that loyalties could be stretched to the breaking point in the absence of proper response from the objects of such sentiments, Manila Cordage, as soon as it was in a position to export, earmarked some of its products for old friends and customers abroad. For during the war, when no abaca was available in western Europe, wide-scale substitution of sisal for abaca in rope-making began. This trend was maintained in the fifties, even until the sixties, for sisal was generally more available than abaca, and prices of the former were consistently lower than those of the latter.<sup>5</sup>

In serving the postwar needs of the foreign and domestic markets, the Company's Sales Managers, first Stuart Barnett, later on John L. Leach, would themselves act as liaison between Manco and its publics, enabling the holding of a continuing dialogue between the two.

Barnett worked briefly with Manila Cordage after the war. A former UST internee, he and his family were one of the earliest repatriated to the United States. When he returned to the Philippines, he joined Manco, where he stayed till the early fifties.

John L. Leach, on the other hand, came to Manila Cordage in 1953 at the invitation of Strickler, becoming Sales Manager in 1955. At the start of his sales career with the Company, he familiarized himself with the firm's products after which time he went on a "getting acquainted" tour of old distributors. He followed up on eastern agencies earlier established by the president of the Company. He visited the Caro brothers in South Africa. Through them, he arranged to improve local distribution by focusing on independent water well drillers' needs. He also stopped by Kuwait. Manco then dealt directly with oil companies such as Aramco, eliminating the need for frequent visits to Arab lands. However, he



did not neglect the European markets; passing through Belgium, France, Germany, Norway, and Sweden in search of new outlets.<sup>6</sup>

By February 1958, when the term of Howard P. Strickler as president ended and Charles A. Carter had succeeded to the presidency of Manila Cordage, John Leach was promoted to Vice President while concurrently Sales Manager of the Company.

After his stint as president, Strickler continued to be actively involved with Manila Cordage for some more years. From 1958 until the end of 1961, when he retired from the organization, he served as Chairman of the Board. Perhaps, it was in partial recognition of his contribution to the shaping of Manco's career that the Board elected him Honorary Chairman effective on the day of his retirement.

However, Howard P. Strickler's stewardship could not have been as successful as it was, were it not for the back-up support he received from Charles A. Carter. Hence when the Board elected Carter to the post of president in 1958, it acknowledged Carter's role in the development of the Company.



H. D. Nichols  
President of Manila Cordage Company  
1966-1968



P. A. Butt  
President of Manila Cordage Company  
1969-1972



*The Senior Staff L to r: R. V. Camua (Export Manager); M. T. Colayco (Corporate Secretary); F. M. Tripon (Treasurer); G. A. Veriño (Vice-President, Production); L. P. Jalbuena (President & Chief Executive Officer); V. Y. Ortiz (Vice President, Marketing); G. L. Ambrosio (Industrial Relations Manager); D. I. Villaruel (Factory Manager); A. de Leon (Chief Accountant)*

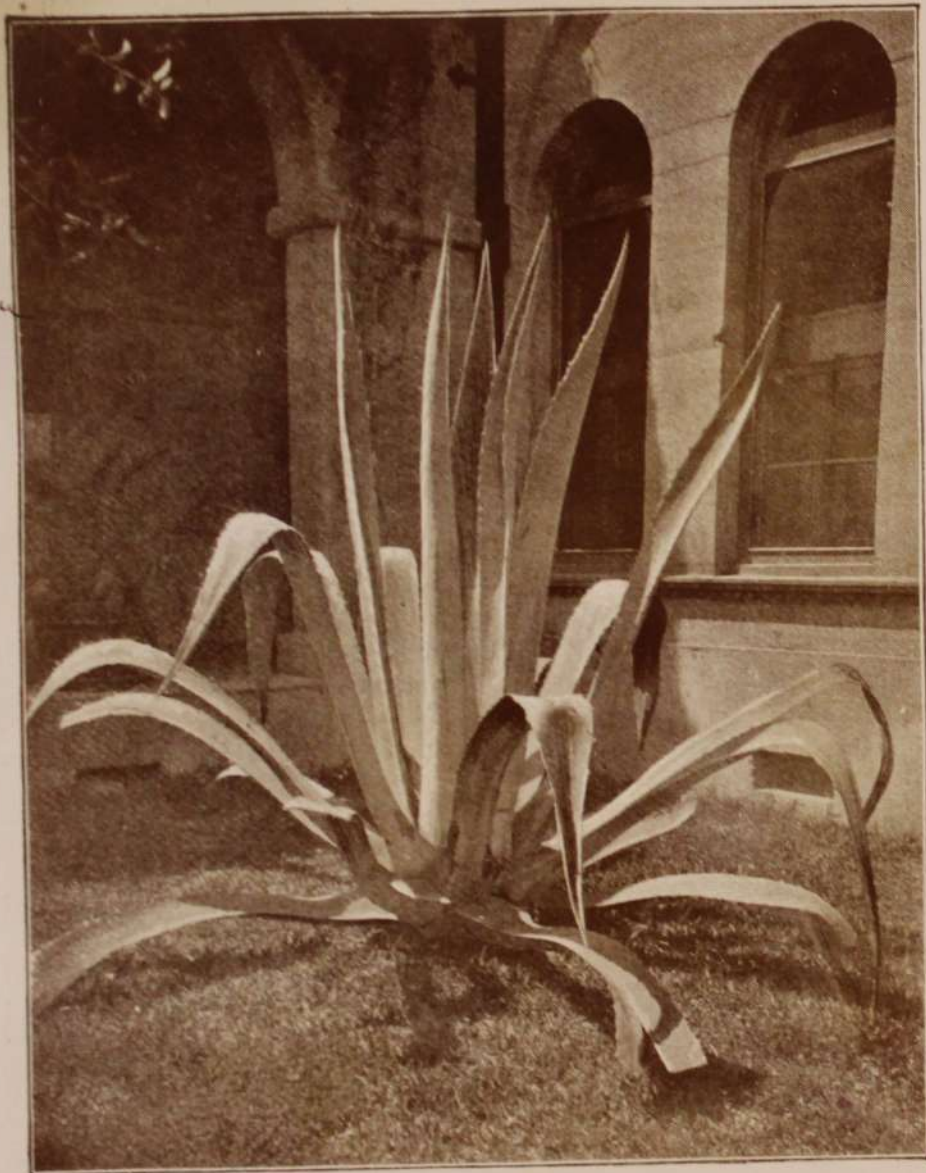


## 6 | Expanding Horizons

“Necessity is the mother of invention” or so claims an old adage. This was perhaps never more credible than in World War II when blighted lands demanded and acquired man-made substitutes for basic raw materials that were in short supply. By the late 1930’s, the foundations had been laid for what would eventually become a complex, multi-faceted and large scale petrochemical industry: that of synthetics. Although initial research efforts were geared primarily towards early victory and the establishment of peace (or of sovereignty over another, depending on which view one favored), when the war was over, the goal of research was the application of the then new discoveries to peacetime pursuits.

Of meaningful interest to the cordage industry was the development and production of synthetic fibers such as nylon (one of the earliest produced), polyester, and polyethylene. These non-cellulosic fibers proved to be eminently suitable for the manufacture of cordage. In general, their superior strength, durability, and lower specific weights provided matchless advantages over natural fibers. In the 1950’s, however, because of their higher production costs, synthetic ropes posed no immediate threat to those made of





1. THE CENTURY PLANT, AGAVE AMERICANA.



2. TAMPICO HEMP PLANT, AGAVE HETERACANTHA.





PULLING FLAX. FIELD OF LINUM USITATISSIMUM.

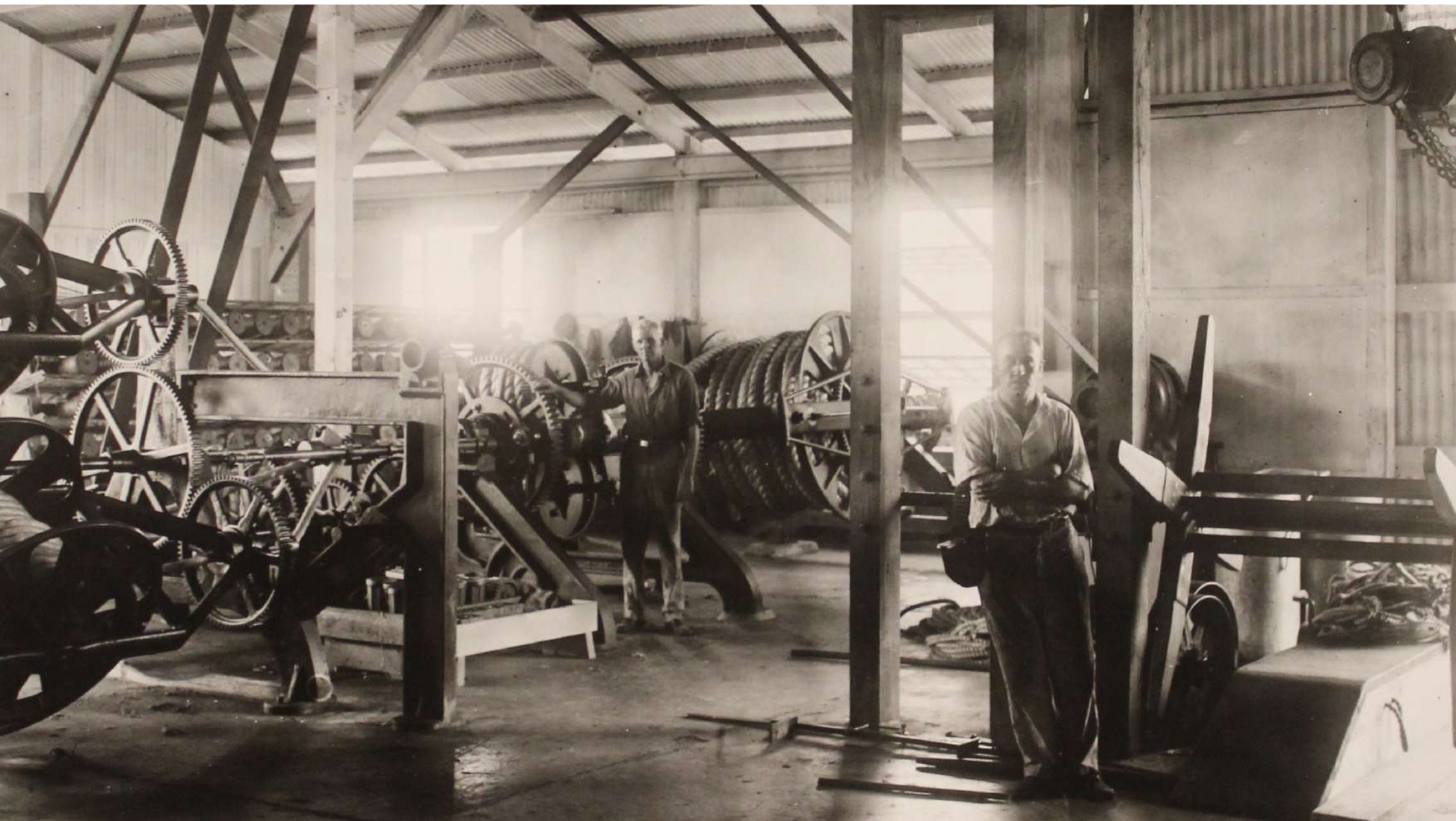










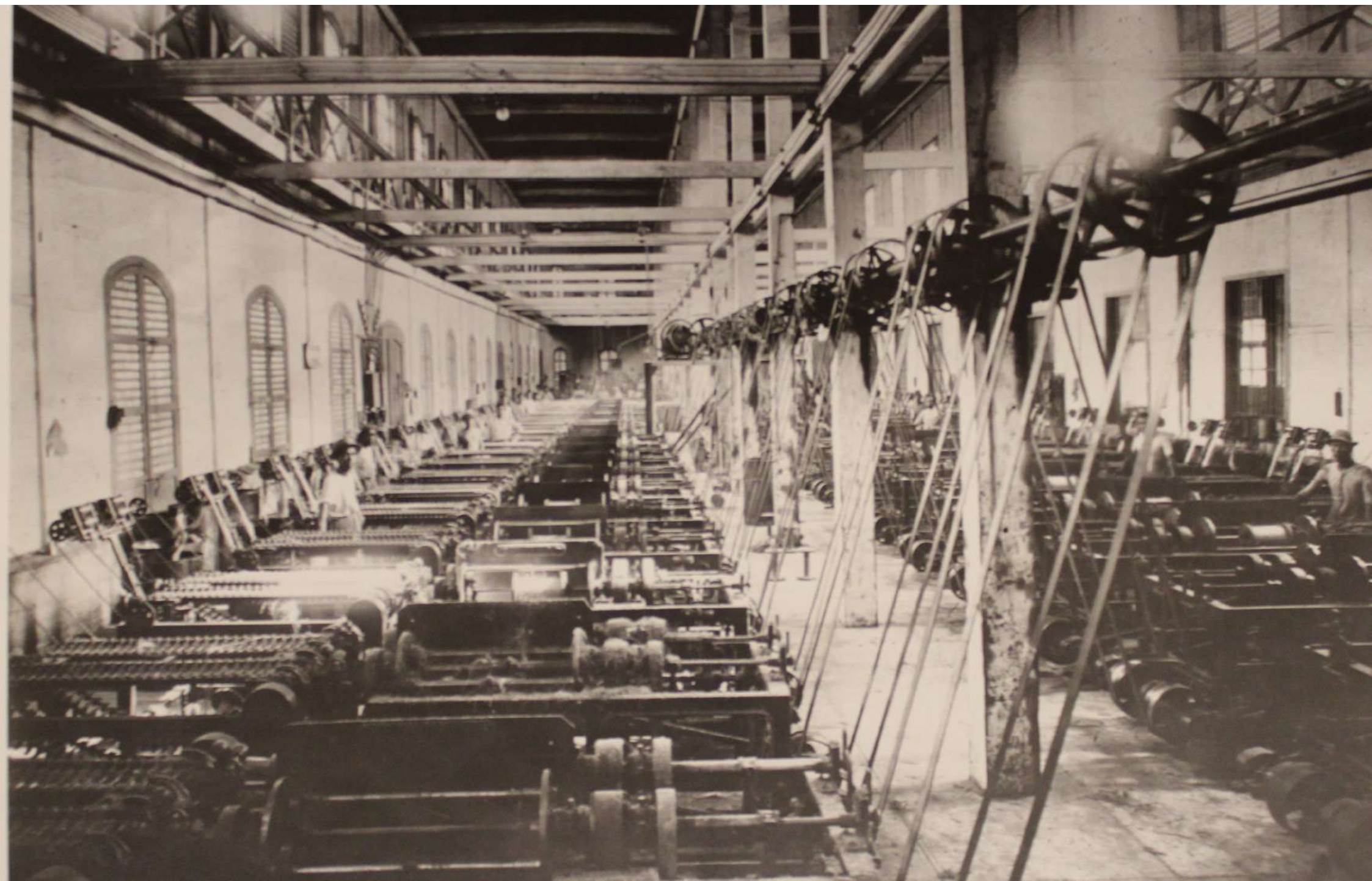


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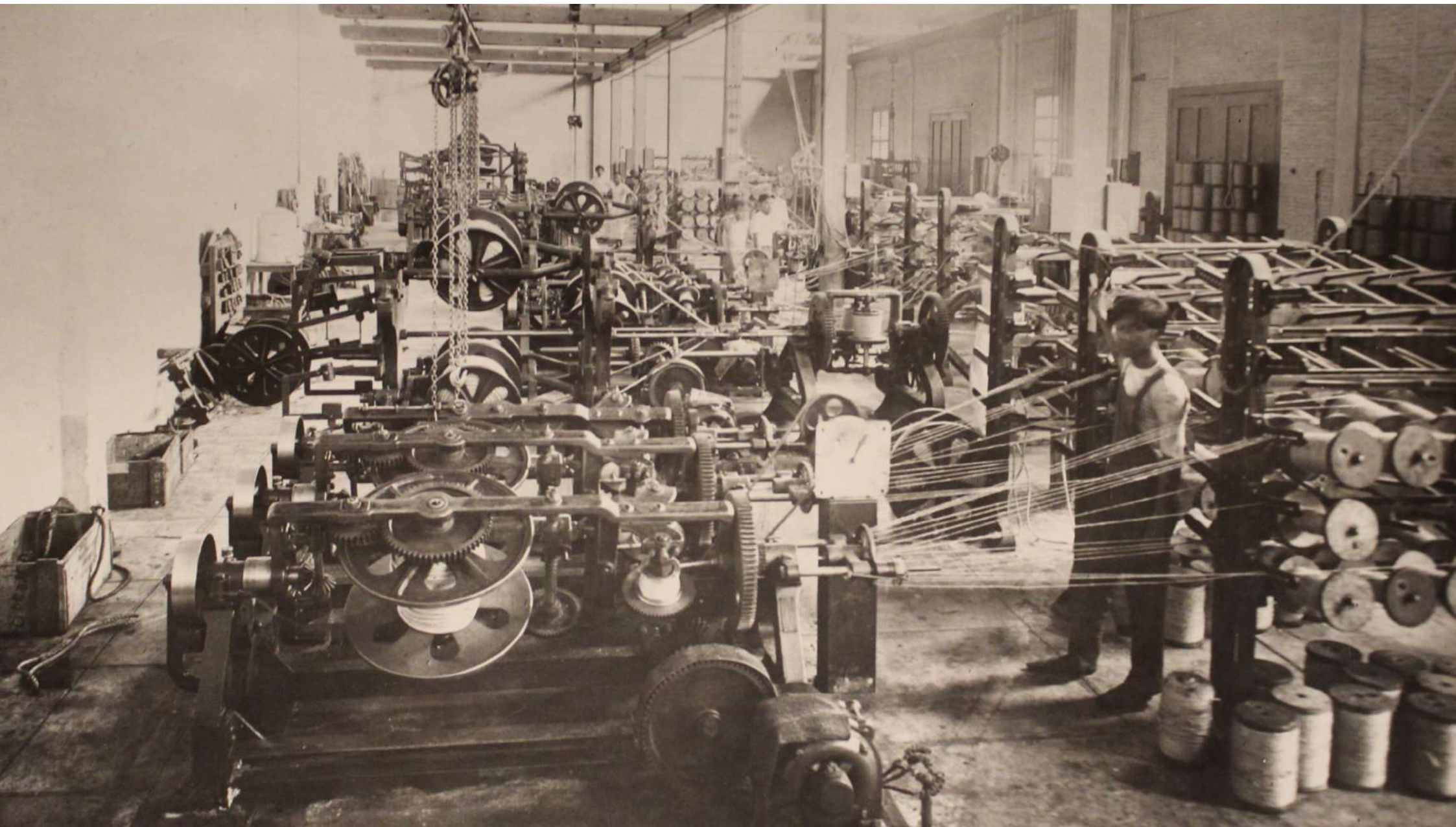






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