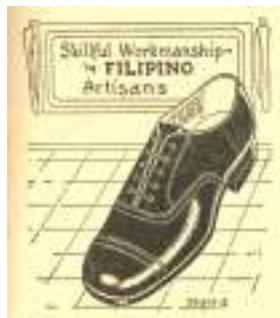




FRANK H. HALE

Old timer, industrialist, and friend of the Filipino people

At the time of his death in Manila in 1952, pioneer shoe manufacturer of the Philippines, Frank H. Hale (b. Aug. 30, 1872) was called "Friend of the Filipino People." He was also known as "Mang Isko" by millions of Filipinos, who gave him this nickname in appreciation of his contribution to Filipino life. His vision was that every Filipino replaced his or her *chinelas* with a pair of sturdy, stylish, and affordable shoes. The brand *Esco* became a household word, and its shoes were soon being worn even in remote areas of the Philippines. Mr. Hale became the largest exporter of shoes to the U. S. and Europe. At the outbreak of WWII, *Esco* was the largest manufacturer of shoes in the Philippines and, according to some economists, possibly in the whole of Asia.



From humble beginnings as a volunteer cobbler with the U. S. Army aboard one of the American ships sailing to the Philippines in 1898, followed by his setting up shop in Fort McKinley under the auspices of General Pershing, Hale built what became *Esco*. Having grown up on a wheat farm in California that suffered from a wheat market disaster in the U. S., he was determined to create something needed in the Philippines to last for generations to come and to be a



Hale's shop in Fort McKinley

stable organization staffed by Filipinos for Filipinos. Reinvesting all profits made, he turned the cobbler shop into a modern industry. He arranged for machinery, backed by royalties, to be brought from United Shoe Manufacturing in Boston, Massachusetts, and imported the finest leathers from the U. S., Italy,

Argentina and Australia, to manufacture fine shoes capable of competing worldwide in terms of style and strength. *Esco* became the manufacturer for leading brands in the U. S. and Europe, as well as the contractor for military and industrial shoes in the Philippines.

Manpowered by 100% Filipino skilled workers, *Esco* became a model corporation where employees were given housing, medical, social and sports facilities. Employees' families thrived, and some opened up their own businesses backed by *Esco* resources.

Hale then experimented with Philippine materials, opening Tropicraft Corporation, which experimented steel and plastics to increase the strength and life rattan furniture. His admiration of the Philippines led him to call it the "Land of Promise, Opportunity." He was included in *Who's Who* with other leaders of agriculture and industry in the Philippines. He also opened Lyric Music House, bringing in the finest musical instruments from abroad for the tastes of talented musicians of the Philippines.

During WWII, the Japanese military government confiscated the factories and turned them to their own uses. Mr. Hale was interned in Santo Thomas where he helped sew up older co-interns' shoes. Reconstruction after the war meant adjusting to new conditions within the new Philippine Republic. He was weak by then but nevertheless returned to success but on a smaller scale.

The exhibit features Mr. Hale's personal belongings, generously donated by his granddaughter Ruth Hale Cobb Hill to the American Historical Collection.



American Historical Collection

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