

# Revisiting the Gaul Mansion

By Paul LaFollette, Editor

In 1789, George Washington wrote to the Marquis de Lafayette, "We have already been too long subject to British prejudices. I use no porter or cheese in my family, but such as is made in America; both these articles may now be purchased of an excellent quality." By 1804, Washington's porter was being supplied by a Philadelphia brewery run by William Gaul, an immigrant from Frankford-am-Main, Germany. Gaul's son William followed in his father's business and became a wealthy brewer and malt dealer. In 1853, he commissioned the building of a mansion at what is now the corner of Broad and Master Streets.



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In 1854, Gaul sold his mansion to Edwin Forrest, an immensely popular, though sometimes controversial, American actor. Forrest's success was such that he earned more than any other actor in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His earnings were carefully invested, and he became quite wealthy. Within his Broad Street mansion, he accumulated what was, at the time, the largest dramatic library in the United States. He contributed to the American theater by hosting competitions for American writers to write plays with American themes.

Forrest died in 1872. His will established the Edward Forrest Home for Decayed Actors, an institution which remained active until 1980. The house at Broad and Master Streets remained within his family until 1880 when it was purchased by the Philadelphia School of Design for Women.

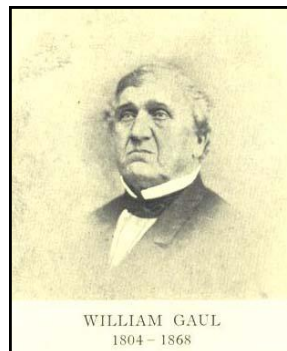
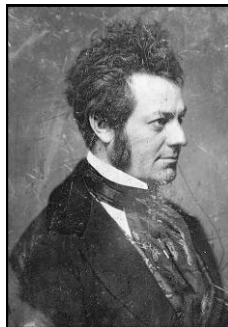
In 1848, the wife of the British Consul in Philadelphia, Sarah Worthington King Peter opened, in her home, a school for women unable to support themselves. The school taught various practical artistic skills and techniques.

In 1850, she left Philadelphia, but requested the Franklin Institute to find a way to continue her students' training. The Franklin Institute eventually established the Philadelphia school of Design for women. It quickly became the country's largest art school for women. After being housed in several locations, by 1880 it was looking for a larger, more permanent facility which it found in the Gaul-Forrest mansion. The school, which ultimately became the Moore College of Art and Design, continued to occupy this property until 1960 when it moved to its current location at Logan Square.

Between 1960 and 1968, the building was put to various uses, including as a church and a restaurant. In 1968 it became home to the Freedom Theater. Freedom Theater was founded in 1966 by John E. Allen Jr. It is the country's oldest African-American theater.

Allen died in 1992, at which time well known director and Yale graduate Walter Dallas became New Freedom Theater's artistic director. Since 1993, New Freedom Theater has been home to Freedom Rep, an award-winning professional performing company. It is also home to the nationally recognized Performing Arts Training Program.

This beautiful building, with all of its historic associations, is a short 10 minute, ½ mile walk from the center of Temple's main campus.



(Above Left to Right): Edwin Forrest Mansion,; Edwin Forrest; William Gaul; Freedom Theater



(Above Left to Right): Philadelphia School of Design for Women Graduation Ceremony 1929; Mansion First Floor Interior 1915; Philadelphia School of Design for Women Main Office 1919. Photographs used with permission of Moore College School of Design Archives