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### CIVIL WAR TO CIVIL RIGHTS: DELIA WEBSTER, PETTICOAT ABOLITIONIST

#### KENTUCKY JURISPRUDENCE.

A HISTORY OF THE TRIAL OF

#### MISS DELIA A. WEBSTER.

At Lexington, Kentucky, Dec'r 17-21, 1844,

BEFORE THE HON. RICHARD BUCKNER.

ON A CHARGE OF AIDING SLAVES TO ESCAPE FROM  
THAT COMMONWEALTH—WITH MISCELLANEOUS REMARKS,  
INCLUDING HER VIEWS ON AMERICAN SLAVERY.

*Kentucky Historical Society collections*

TRIMBLE COUNTY — Born in Vermont and educated at Oberlin College in Ohio, Delia Webster was tried, convicted and jailed in Kentucky for helping slaves run away from Lexington in 1844. After serving time, she was determined to continue her antislavery efforts. In the winter of 1852, she bought a farm in Trimble County on a hill overlooking the Ohio River. She became a suspect when area slave owners reported that a significant number of their slaves were missing. In February 1854, a community meeting in

Bedford passed a resolution stating, "Whereas it is known that Miss Delia A. Webster had recently run off numerous slaves from Trimble County, therefore resolved that it is the will and determination of the citizens of said county that Miss Delia A. Webster leave the State." Unwilling to part with her farm, which she apparently did use to shelter escaped slaves, she was arrested. After what she called "a mock trial," authorities jailed her, but she soon was released on a technicality and returned to her farm.

In June 1854, Webster was indicted on an issue related to the 1844 Lexington escapes. This time she fled across the Ohio River to Indiana to avoid arrest. She hid in various locations around Madison, Ind., but was captured and tried there for the 1844 charges. Acquitted, by 1855 she had returned to New England. Four years later, she moved back to Madison.

Webster apparently never risked reentering Kentucky. Instead, she lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, Madison, Ind., and, after the Civil War, in Iowa, where she died in 1904.

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100 W. Broadway | Frankfort, KY 40601  
502-564-1792 | [www.history.ky.gov](http://www.history.ky.gov)



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