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Sommario/riassunto	In 1847, in a small rural courthouse in Coles County, Illinois, Abraham Lincoln represented a Kentucky slave owner named Robert Matson in his attempt to recover a runaway slave woman and her four children. Most Americans, even those with a penchant for the nation's history, have never heard of this court case. This is no coincidence. Lincoln's involvement in the case has troubled and bewildered most students and biographers of the ""Great Emancipator."" In many assessments, the case inspires rationalizations and distortions; in others, avoidance

and denial. These approaches are a disservice to
