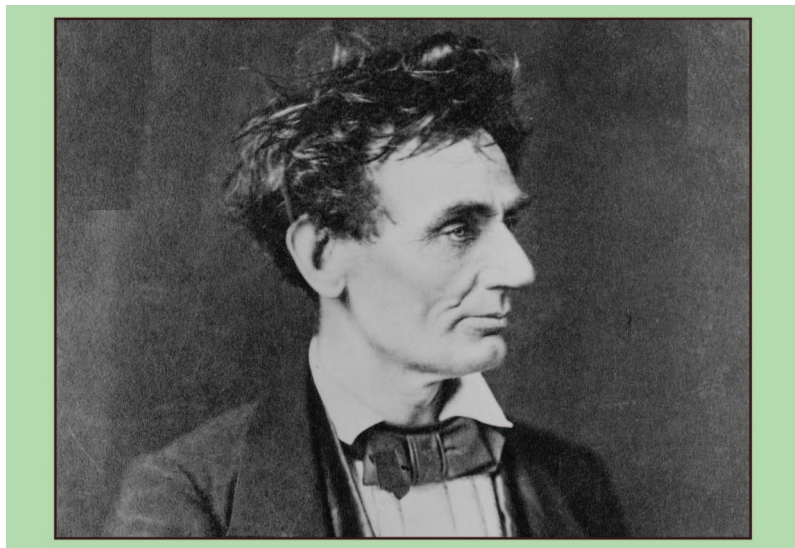


Lincoln v. Chloroform Insanity



During a dispute over a property boundary in June of 1855, Isaac Wyant was shot by a gun-wielding man named Anson Rusk. According to one witness, after surgical amputation of his arm, Wyant emerged from his chloroform anesthetic “ever after morbidly fearful that Rusk would kill him . . . and complained greatly about his head and exhibited many signs of being unsettled in his intellect.” Wyant would not just return home—he would return fire . . . at the county clerk’s office. Rusk expired from the four gunshot wounds that Wyant inflicted. In 1857 a wild-haired young attorney named Abraham Lincoln (*above*) assisted in prosecuting the murder case now titled *People v. Wyant*. Unfortunately for Lincoln, Wyant’s defense attorney would prevail by convincing the jury that surgical chloroform had driven Wyant insane. Wyant would be committed to a mental hospital, and, 3 years later, Lincoln would be committed to running for the presidency of the United States. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image also appears in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

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