



Shawn Clements, owner of the Dunham House, is filmed for an upcoming documentary about the lives of President Barack Obama's ancestors, the family that built the Dunham House.

## Dunham House featured in upcoming documentary

By EMILY WEST

Tribune Correspondent

KEMPTON — The spotlight will be on the Dunham House in an upcoming documentary about the lives of the family who built it — who happened to be ancestors of Pres. Barack Obama — and the owner's efforts to restore and preserve it.

This week, preliminary filming took place at the stately farmhouse in Kempton. Videographer Matt Klefer of Soapbox Entertainment recorded footage of Dunham House, its owner, Shawn Clements, and areas around Kempton for a video trailer to be posted on [www.obama-dunhamfilm.com](http://www.obama-dunhamfilm.com) to promote the production. Crews will arrive for the main production in a few weeks.

Plans are to document the lives of the Dunhams, who arrived in Tipton County in the 1800s, bought land on the far western edge of the county from the Miami Indian Reserve in the 1840s, lived there and became an influential family in Indiana.

Another part of the story will chronicle how Clements purchased a rundown house to renovate, learned its history and has made great efforts to transform it to past glories and future importance. It will also show Clements' struggles to find the funds to restore the house on his own into a place of pride for the community.

Behind the documentary is Indiana author and film producer John Kleiman, who was in Kempton this week for

the project.

Kleiman said he has known Clements for many years, but had lost track of him. A few months ago, he Googled Clements' name and found information about him, his house and Obama's visit to it in 2008 while campaigning for office.

"I said to myself, 'This is a heck of a story,'" Kleiman said.

He decided it would make a good film and started the ball rolling. Having a number of contacts in Los Angeles, he called Steve Zukerman of Soapbox Entertainment, an advertising, marketing and public relations firm involved in a number of high-profile projects in Hollywood, including television shows, music videos and trailers and red carpet events, such as for the premiere of the latest Spiderman movie. Zukerman was interested.

The finished documentary will be between 45 and 60 minutes long and will be marketed to channels such as A&E, National Geographic and Biography, or even other major networks.

"They have the contacts to get it to the people who decide," Kleiman said of Soapbox. "Some of the top names and A-list people know about this project. A couple of major executive producers are well aware of it also."

"The only problem will be getting all the information in 45 to 60 minutes," he said.

As portions of the trailer were taped this week,

Kleiman conducted short question-and-answer segments with Clements, and Klefer recorded him walking through the house.

Later filming will include interviews with local residents who have first-hand knowledge of the Dunhams and their influence. Zukerman will be in Tipton County with his crew for the major taping.

Once completed, a sneak preview will be planned locally, Kleiman said.

Kleiman is excited about the production and thinks others will be as well.

"My God, I didn't know about that house. Can you believe it's in Indiana?" Kleiman said. "That's what I want people to say."

Clements, who has been enthusiastic about the house, its history and its association with Obama since the beginning, isn't surprised someone wants to make a documentary about it.

"This just kind of came along. I thought something would," he said. "It's a great American story. There's so many things people don't know — fascinating stuff."

Kleiman said it will be his job to make sure he gets all the historical accuracy from Clements. He also hopes the story will inspire others to help Clements with the house restoration by making donations to the project.

"We'll be telling stories about him and his struggles to bring it back to life," Kleiman said. "But, this won't be a version of 'This Old House.'"