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Obama home now focus of documentary

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Jim Shella

TIPTON, Ind. (WISH) - A Tipton County home that belonged to ancestors of Barack Obama is now the focus of a documentary film in an effort to shed light on the President's roots.

The project is called "A Single Root."

It's all about exposing the background of Barack Obama's white mother and her family.

This week a California film crew showed up to document improvements at the Dunham House outside Kempton in Tipton County, and to record the history of the home built by Barck Obama's great-great-great-great grandparents.

Steve Zukerman is overseeing the project. "You know, as a filmmaker," said Zukerman, "my goal is to tell stories that have social significance."

And so that's why George Roe of Brownsburg was answering questions in front of three cameras.

His son lived in the house in the '40s.

"I think it's very significant that we have the roots of our President represented in this house," Roe told filmmakers.



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Plans call for the project to be completed before the November election.

Those plans also call for premieres in Kokomo and Indianapolis.

Ancestors of Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight also lived in the Dunham House.

Goodnight and the president are distant cousins.

Executive Producer John Kleiman hopes to create a theatrical film.

"I do believe we're preserving history," he says.

Some of that history includes a 2004 visit to the home by then-Presidential candidate Barack Obama, who stopped campaigning long enough to attend a picnic.

One hope is that a successful film could help finance renovations here and that could lead to another visit by the president.

"We want to do something that we know that he's going to appreciate and he's going to be proud of," says Dunham House owner Shawn Clements.

"That's my number one goal."

Zukerman hopes the film could help make the president less of a polarizing figure.

"There's a divide going on still based on race and culture," he says, "and it's something that we need to get past."

There's also a desire to generate more visitors to the Dunham House.

"I wish this would become Kempton's field of dreams," says Kleiman.