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Philly turns in early for royal wedding watching



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Associated Press - April 29, 2011 10:15 AM ET

PHILADELPHIA (AP) - Even in the birthplace of the Declaration of Independence, Americans turned out early Friday to watch the royal wedding live.

For some, it was the chance to get decked out in their finest dresses, elegant hats and fancy suits. For others, it meant an excuse to sip English brews and mimosas before work. But for many in Philadelphia, it was also the chance to witness royal history that drove many out early to watch Prince William and Kate Middleton tie the knot.

"We've been up since 3:30," said Maria Amedeo, 23, an accountant watching the wedding with co-workers at the Elephant & Castle pub - replete with a bright red British call box - across the street from where they work in downtown Philadelphia. "It's history. It's not the same as Tivo-ing it."

1 of her colleagues perched at the bar said she was struck by Middleton's dress, which she described as "timeless," and enduring.

"It actually looks like my mother's dress when she got married," Nicole Valerio, 28, said of Middleton's dress. "It's very timeless. It's not like Diana's."

A few blocks away, more than 100 people filled the hotel ballroom at the Rittenhouse Hotel on the city's tony Rittenhouse Square to watch the BBC broadcast of the wedding on big screens around the room while eating full English breakfasts. Women wore formal dresses and colorful hats with feathers and flowers, while men wore jackets and ties for the occasion.

At one point, as Prince William appeared to have trouble getting the ring on his bride's finger, the room filled with chuckles.

Kathy Maron, 54, of the Philadelphia suburb of Fort Washington, Pa., was sporting a tiara for the occasion, attending the breakfast as a special occasion with an old friend from college.

"We wanted to feel like princesses, so we decided to wear the tiaras," Maron said. "It's fun to live through other people's royal heritage."

Tina Krinsky, 56, of Radnor, Pa., had donned a green blazer and a grey feathered hat replete with fancy netting for the occasion, having spent the night at the hotel with her South African husband.

"It's reminiscent of when John Kennedy Jr. got married to Carolyn," said Krinsky, referring to their 1996 wedding. "It's so beautiful."

Up the road in Elkins Park, a suburb next to Philadelphia, dozens of royal wedding watchers turned out for the event at the Hiway Theatre, a renovated single-screen cinema. Seated comfortably in chairs attendees marveled at the site of Kate in her gown and William in his military uniform.

But before the ceremony was over, many of the Philly celebrants had to be on their way to work. Bob Arcangel, 38, was sipping a beer at Elephant & Castle with a friend before heading on his way to work at La Salle University, where he helps to recruit international students.

"It's the whole pomp and circumstance," Arcangel said of his wedding-watching. "We don't have anything like this here in the states."

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