

Kate Smith – The Boston Blog



by Kate Smith

Kate Middleton's face adorns many news stands and book stores here in Boston and there is a strong sense of excited anticipation about the imminent arrival of the Royal baby.

Yet commemorations of the American Revolution are also ubiquitous – this week reenactment societies celebrated the anniversary of General George Washington taking command of the Continental Army here in Cambridge in July 1775. The pride is manifest in the ordinary non-elite New Englanders who left their farms, mills and smiths to fight against King George III for freedom, to forge a new republic and give birth to a new nation.

Yet this fervour for the House of Windsor seems, initially at least, to be contradictory. There is little sense of old elites defeated in the turning of a revolution. Instead, for many Americans, the celebritisation of Kate Middleton chimes with that of Kim Kardashian or Jennifer Lopez. The closest parallel though is probably Grace Kelly. The trajectory, or their 'journey' is from ordinary girl to extraordinariness. A star. A princess. Like Grace Kelly, Kate Middleton has, ironically, become a poster girl for the American Dream.

Which explains why name recognition of Prince Charles or Prince William seems poorer than for the Duchess of Cambridge.

With the pre-given Union Jack as the logo, the commoditisation of royalty romper suits sits comfortably alongside the extensive merchandise for the Red Sox and the Boston Celtics.

The monarchy, drawn into the lodestar of American culture, is absorbed by it and any true meaning as an old enemy, as constitutional monarchy and Supreme Governor of the Church of England, burns up in its orbit. The historical and

constitutional meaning wanes as the celebritisation waxes.

Which explains why there is no merchandising of George Washington or the Patriots to be seen. Sober commemorative medals, children's history books or totemic statues of Washington and Lincoln abound. No equivalent to solar-powered waving queens or royal burping bibs. America is not unique in this. Scots take its own battles very seriously, the French, Bastille day and so on. A nation has need to revere its history, its own journey of arrival. Otherwise without its birth rites it knows not what it stands for. Why blood was spilt and against whom and what it should now bear arms. History seems indivisible from politics, even in the telling of it.

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