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Clinton wedding fever excites rural NY village

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(REUTERS) -

By Michelle Nichols

RHINEBECK, New York (Reuters) - Bill and Hillary Clinton's daughter will be married on Saturday in Rhinebeck, and the picturesque New York village is basking in the glory of hosting what many have dubbed America's royal wedding.



A message is seen on a sign at Rhinebeck tack, a horse riding equipment shop in Rhinebeck, New York

Signs and pictures congratulating Chelsea Clinton, the only child of the former U.S. president and the U.S. secretary of state, and groom Marc Mezvinsky hang in many shop windows, and the high-profile nuptials have the rural town talking.

While wedding plans have remained top secret, the presence of U.S. Secret Service agents in Rhinebeck, 100 miles north of New York City, point to the ceremony being held at Astor Courts, an historic 50-acre (20-hectare) estate on the Hudson River.

"It's all everyone's talking about," said Cassidy Reed, 20, an assistant at a local hair salon. "We haven't had one client in here who hasn't said something about it."

Wedding balloons blew in the breeze outside The Rug Garden, a dress shop mannequin wore a wedding gown and an equestrian store offered advice with a sign: "No nagging the groom."

"To welcome Chelsea and Marc and all their friends we're having champagne and cake," said Deborah Belding, 56, owner of The Rug Garden. "It's an honor that a former first daughter is coming to our town and getting married."

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said her daughter had sworn her to secrecy and the wedding plans have withstood leaks better than many Washington secrets. Local media has speculated that the rehearsal dinner will be held in a stone barn on nearby Grasmere estate and that the bride will wear a wedding gown designed by Oscar de la Renta.

The guest list is reported to be around 400 and rumored to include several Washington and Hollywood heavyweights. While President Barack Obama was said to be invited, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs said he was unaware of any plans by the president and first lady Michelle Obama to attend.

For disappointed Clinton donors who didn't make the cut, the family made clear only people with a personal connection to the bride and groom were invited. "We love you all but this is her wedding," Hillary Clinton said in a NBC News interview.

"AN AMAZINGLY LUXURIOUS WEDDING"

Claudia Hanlin of New York wedding planning firm The Wedding Library, estimated the celebration's cost at about \$2 million. "It's going to be an amazingly luxurious wedding," she said. "The country is looking to this as its royal wedding."

Chelsea Clinton, 30, and Mezvinsky, 32, have known each other since they were teenagers. He is an investment banker whose parents Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky and Edward Mezvinsky were once Democratic U.S. House of Representatives members.

Chelsea Clinton, who worked at a New York hedge fund and has been studying health policy at

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