Helen Beatrix Potter was born in London on July 28, 1866, the elder child of lawyer Rupert Potter and his wife, Helen Leech. Beatrix Potter lived a typical Victorian upper middle class childhood, and was educated at home, spending much of her time upstairs in her nursery with her governess. Her parents, who both enjoyed painting and drawing, led an active social life amongst writers, politicians and artists including the Pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais.

Beatrix Potter’s artistic pursuits began in her youth. She was a keen witness of the world around her. As an artist, she was largely self-taught, relying on her powers of observation and honed by the dedicated copying of works. She sketched landscapes, flowers, fossils, as well as animals and other subjects from the natural world. Potter worked in a broad spectrum of media including watercolor, pen and ink, and pencil, and experimented in oils and with print-making. Like her father, she was an early practitioner of the art of photography. Beatrix Potter’s work is characterized by delicacy and great attention to detail.

At the age of 21 Potter began a scientific study of fungus. Charles McIntosh, the ‘Perthshire Naturalist,’ guided her in her work. After more than 13 years, she developed a theory on the germination of spores which, though rejected by the scientific establishment of the day, is today recognized as being ahead of its time.

In 1902, at the age of 36, Beatrix Potter published her first book, The Tale of Peter Rabbit. She produced 28 books in her lifetime, including the 23 little Tales, which are all still in print today. These books have sold 150 million copies and have been translated into more than 35 languages.

By the time she had reached her 40th birthday, Beatrix Potter had acquired Hill Top, her first farm in England’s Lake District. This became a quiet refuge for her work. Over the remaining years of her life she became a respected local farmer, landowner, and sheep breeder. She keenly promoted the traditional farming methods and ways of life, which she knew to be essential to the preservation of the beautiful, wild environment of the Lakes. In 1913 she married local solicitor William Heelis. They had no children.

Ultimately, Beatrix Potter became a major benefactor to her nation. She donated her holdings – 4,000 acres including 15 farms and cottages – to Britain’s National Trust, the organization established to act as a guardian for the nation in the acquisition and protection of threatened coastline, countryside and buildings.

Succumbing to bronchitis, Beatrix Potter died in 1943.