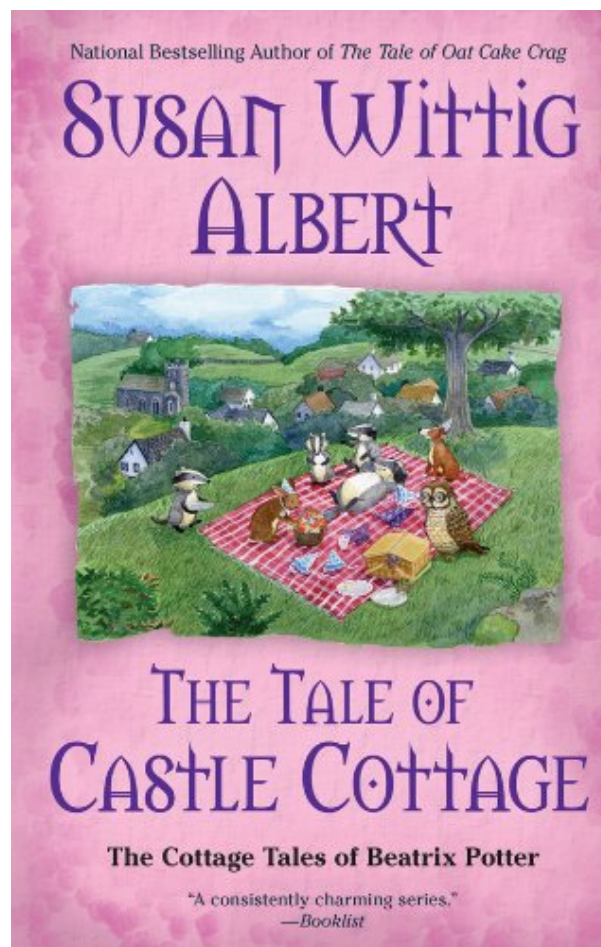


THE TALE OF CASTLE COTTAGE (THE COTTAGE TALES OF BEATRIX P) BY SUSAN WITTIG ALBERT



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National Bestselling Author of *The Tale of Oat Cake Crag*

SUSAN WITTIG ALBERT



THE TALE OF CASTLE COTTAGE

The Cottage Tales of Beatrix Potter

*"A consistently charming series."
—Booklist*

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Review

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“A wonderful, entertaining tale.”--Genre Go Round Reviews

“Susan Wittig Albert is a rare author, one who can always be relied on to deliver a great story, wonderful and memorable characters, and writing that is top-notch.”--Cozy Library

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The latest in the Cottage Tales series-starring Miss Potter herself!

It's the heart of summer in 1913, and Beatrix is eager to marry her fiancé, solicitor William Heelis. But there are a few obstacles blocking the happy couple's path to the altar, like the troubled remodeling of Castle Cottage-Will and Beatrix's future home...

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Most helpful customer reviews

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Cute historical cozy - if you don't mind talking animals

By CJ-MO

"The Tale of Castle Cottage" is a fictional story based on true events in the life of children's author Beatrix Potter. Beatrix is in the process of renovating Castle Cottage where she and her fiancé Will Heelis will live after they are married, if Beatrix's parents ever give the couple their blessing. Even if that occurs, they may

not have a place to live since the renovations are taking an extraordinary amount of time, possibly due to thievery on the part of the contractor. Does the crooked contractor have anything to do with other thefts, ranging from a tin of tea to a rare book, that are going on in the village? As Beatrix decides to get to the bottom of the thefts and the construction delays, someone else undertakes a separate investigation into the thefts - Crumpet, a gray tabby cat.

"The Tale of Castle Cottage" is an unusual book. It is part historical fiction and part fictionalized biography. In addition, to tie into the real Beatrix Potter's animal stories for children, the animals in the story talk to each other about all the events occurring in the village. While this is the first book I have read in this series, I've enjoyed several other books by this author. This book is written in Ms. Albert's usual excellent style, and the portions covering the historical background of the author and the village are wonderful. I am okay with Beatrix's pets occasionally commenting on the discussions going on between Beatrix and her friends to add a bit of charm to the book. However, later when entire chapters are devoted to the lives of the animals and parties they are planning, I began to lose interest. I am an animal lover and am able to suspend belief when reading a fictional story; I have enjoyed several cozies featuring crime-solving and magical cats and dogs. However, it is distracting for me to be immersed in life in a 1913 English village, and then switch to animals discussing their picnic plans or concerns about a gang of criminal rats.

While there are many imaginative scenes with the animals, the author's descriptions of the current state of Beatrix's homes Hill Top Farm and Castle Cottage remind the reader that Beatrix and Will are real people and that many of the places in the book are also real. These excellent scenes make you want to hop on a plane and visit the quaint village of Sawrey. I love the author's historical notes at the end of the story, which give context to the book and help clarify which parts of the story are fictional and which really happened. The recipes for some of the dishes mentioned in the story that were popular during the era in which the book is set are another nice touch.

Susan Wittig Albert is a wonderful author, and I appreciate the research she has done to make the historical details of the book so accurate. Much of the book is entertaining, but while it is a cute mystery and romantic love story of Beatrix Potter and Will Heelis, the whimsy of the talking animals is too fanciful for me. However, if you don't mind a bit of Rita Mae and Sneaky Pie Brown mixed in with your historical fiction, then you may find this book to your liking. It just isn't my cup of tea.

This review was originally written for the "Season for Romance" E-Zine. The book was provided to me in exchange for an honest review.

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

great historical cozy

By A Customer

In the summer of 1913, Beatrix Potter is currently residing at Hill Top Farm in the Lake District while working on her latest story *The Tale of Pigling Bland*. She admits to her publisher that her eight drawings are not that good as Beatrix still recovers from her recent illness in which she lived with her parents at their domicile in Kensington. As she works on her latest novel, Beatrix also oversees the renovation of her new home that she and her fiancé solicitor William Heelis will move into once Mr. Biddle finishes the Castle Cottage improvements and they are married (in spite of the doubts of her parents).

While the author struggles with her new work, the locals of nearby Near Sawrey begin to misplace items ranging in value from baked goods to money to family heirlooms. Her friend Sarah Barwick believes she is the victim of a thief, but fears it is someone she knows. However that pales in comparison to the death of carpenter Lewis Adcock who was just fired by Biddle. Beatrix and Will end up investigating the thefts, the

death and Biddle's lack of commitment to the castle Cottage renovation.

The eighth Cottage Tales of Beatrix Potter (see The Tale of Oat Cake Crag) is a great historical cozy that brings to life the Lake District just prior to WWI. The story line is a wonderful entertaining tale as once again Susan Wittig Albert combines Ms. Potter's real life, the fables of the animals who dominate her tales and an enjoyable amateur sleuth into a delightful story.

Harriet Klausner

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Is eight really enough?

By Corinne H. Smith

What a joy! What a true literary joy it is to return to the Land between the Lakes, to visit the Victorian-Age households owned by children's author Beatrix Potter, and to eavesdrop on the everyday conversations of the people and the animals of the area. The books in this Cottage Tales series always offer a welcome respite from the complex cares of 21st-century life.

This episode has multiple plotlines to follow. The year is 1913, and Miss Potter has arranged for some construction to be done on her second major property, the Castle Farm. The job seems to cost more and to take longer than she ever anticipated, however. She's got to look into that matter, and perhaps request the aid of her fiancé, Will Heelis, in remedying the situation. (Speaking of Will: will the couple EVER get married? Or will family disdain and interference get the better of both of them?) In the meantime, the community appears to be on the edge of a full-fledged invasion by some nasty rats. It may be up to the neighborhood animals to deal with these rodent-thieves, who are robbing the humans of both trinkets and edibles. Add to these problems the sudden death of a good man, and all of the inhabitants must stop to consider the reasons and the ramifications of the act. It is indeed a busy time in this otherwise bucolic English landscape.

This historical fiction/cozy mystery distinguishes itself by being based on the story of a real-life author, told in the style that she herself used while writing her own Peter Rabbit tales. The text is replete with marvelous humor and delightful turns of phrase. (Example from page 99: "[Dimity] had ended up in the arms of Christopher Kittredge -- well, one arm, since the fellow, a war hero, had left the other with the Boers.") Yes, there are talking animals (and if you can't handle those italicized asides, then you'd best not pick up any volume in this series). There's also a personal narrator, who at times feels free to politely intrude and to interrupt the action to approach the reader directly and to offer inside observations. You might have to "suspend your disbelief" a bit; but when you do, all of these elements add up to much merry reading.

This time the additional explanatory material supplied by the author at the book's conclusion very neatly ties every loose end and supplies a worthy wrap-up of Beatrix's biography. Can we handle the fact that this eighth installment is the LAST ONE in the run? Susan Wittig Albert's writing continues with several other mystery series, so she obviously has other non-Beatrix Potter tales to tell. I certainly wish her well in all of her endeavors. But I can't help feeling a small sense of loss that we'll have no more new adventures from Bea, Will, Rascal, Crumpet, Bosworth, Hyacinth, and all of the rest. And what, no more Badger Rules of Thumb?!? Bye-bye, Near and Far Sawrey. Our time together has indeed been both fun and educational.

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