

Jan and Idske de Groot  
by Daughter Christine  
Baker  
Dutch Immigrants  
Veendam  
June 8, 1952



Jan de Groot grew up on a dairy farm in a small village in the northern province of Freisland, Netherlands. He was the second oldest of 7



Jan and Idske de Groot  
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Aboard SS Veendam

children (5 boys and 2 girls). Idske de Jong lived a few kms away, the eldest of 2 sisters whose mother was a widow from the time the girls were pre-schoolers.

Jan and Idske were married

in Abbega, Freisland on May 15, 1952. They wanted to pursue farming but with limited availability of farms and finances, they decided to immigrate to Canada and start a new life together. They knew many others who had left for Canada and 2 of Jan's brothers were already in Ontario. With the assistance of an immigration fieldman, Jan secured sponsorship as a farm worker in Wallenstein, Ontario. Their hope was to work for a few years to save enough money to one day purchase and operate their own dairy farm. A friend who taught school gave them a short course in English and they gathered the necessary paperwork for their departure on May 30, 1952, two weeks after their wedding. They traveled overseas on the S.S. Veendam II, departing from Rotterdam.

Their accommodation was not ideal for newlyweds as Jan and Idske were housed in separate quarters. As they crossed the ocean, they came to realize how much water there is in the world. Idske suffered with some seasickness but both were very glad to see land after many days at sea. They arrived at Pier 21 in Halifax on June 9 and traveled by train to Montreal, and then on to Guelph, Ontario. Their train trip gave them an idea of the vast country they had come to. Travelling in the eastern provinces, through their immigrant eyes, they saw a rugged country with

large forested areas and many farms that they felt were not as prosperous looking as what they were used to back home.

Jan and Idske had very little to begin with other than their clothing, a few household items and a small amount of cash. Their household effects such as furniture and wedding gifts took many weeks to arrive by cargo shipment. Their farm sponsor was a difficult employer who treated the new immigrants with little respect or consideration. They lived in a separate portion of the farmer's house, their washroom facilities being an outhouse that had been abandoned by the owner many years earlier. During their first Canadian winter, with Idske now expecting their first child, their employer continued to be reluctant to share his wood supply with them for heating and cooking needs.



The language barrier was a challenge as Jan and Idske tried to learn English. One day their boss informed them they would have to prepare for the visit of an important man soon to arrive at the farm. The farmer told them how necessary this visitor would be and how the farm couldn't survive without him. Idske began to wonder who this person could possibly be. She soon found out when the "visitor" she understood to be a "Mr. Fertilizer" actually arrived and was spread on the fields. Jan adopted the Canadian version of his name, John, while Idske adopted the name Jessie.

Friends helped gather John and Jessie's belongings together to be moved to new employment with another farmer while Jessie was in the hospital after the birth of their first child. John and Jessie continued to work for various farmers before the opportunity came for them to rent and operate their own dairy farm near Guelph, Ontario. They became Canadian

citizens in 1959. In 1966, John and Jessie were thrilled to purchase their own farm northeast of Guelph, where they moved with their 6 children. The farm had many upgrades and expansions to the buildings over the years.

The de Groot's were proud to be Canadians, living in a country that offered so much for their whole family and the opportunity to fulfill the dream of owning their own farm.