

THE GHOSTS OF OLD ST.CLOUD
(Keith Abler)

It's a Norman Rockwell painting
Engraved in my memory
On the cover of the Saturday Evening Post
The Ghosts of St. Cloud speak to me

Watching for the spirits that come out on occasion
Residents of the old hotel
The bald old bartender hung himself in the corner
Stories no one wants to tell
They came here from Prussia tough skinned and determined
So many generations ago
To farm the fertile land and drink the clean water
Find a new life from the old

I grew up spending summers on the farm with my cousins
Hearing stories of old St.Cloud
My Grandmother would tell me of the hard drinking farmhands
And the harvest of peas they must sell
The taverns outnumbered by good Catholic Christians
Coming from mass Sunday morn
Filling the kessels to take to the picnic
For the baseball and card games and corn

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My Grandfather would send us to the pub for a refill
We'd skim a glass or two on our way
Wolf Lake's cold waters or the girls that would offer
Having fun on a hot summer day
My Grandmother Claire was gone before I knew her
Phil was the postman in town
Grandpa Tom on his tractor and Margaret in her kitchen
Are memories that all serve me well