field. Asking if I had my guitar with me, the governor suggested we drive out to the work camp at New Salem where young men who have run afoul of the law are housed. During our visit I sang and played for a half hour or so. Driving back to Springfield, Governor Kernan, who has a passionate interest in youth work, suggested that a folk music program be developed in the state’s penal institutions. The result is that the school, since last spring, has been conducting classes in guitar and folk music at the Illinois State Industrial School for Boys at Sheridan. Ray Tate initiated the classes which are now being conducted by Mike Mashkes with great success. Two Chicago manufacturers, The Harmony and the Kay Musical Instrument Companies, generously contributed guitars to this pilot-project which is in the process of being enlarged.

Another extension of the school’s activity is ‘Thursday night at the Saddle Club.’ While these weekly musical soirées could hardly qualify as a public service, they are a marvelous demonstration of the vitality of the school idea.

The Saddle Club is a neighborhood bar one block east of the school on North Avenue. Pat Moretti, its genial publican, makes a large room next to the bar available; Bob Stanley, a student at the school, sets up a public address system; and at about 10:45 P.M. people start flocking in. Mind you, a great part of the crowd are teachers and students at the school where they have been playing and singing since eight o’clock. But then, from eleven to closing time (two A.M.) under the casual unobtrusive direction of Ray Tate, who started this tradition two years ago, one can hear folk music performed in its ideal environment—where there is no thought of patriy or pelf—where no distinction is made between professional and amateur—where people are singing and playing for friends and strangers alike—just for the sheer joy of it. This activity is burgeoning also. There is now a ‘Wednesday night at the Saddle Club.’

In passing, mention should be made of the school’s participation in “Las Posadas,” a delightful Mexican Christmas pilgrimage through the Old Town neighborhood. This yearly event, sponsored by our friend Federico Camacho of the Cafe Azteca, is replete with the Holy Family, donkey, scores of guitars and hundreds of singers. It is now in its ninth year.

The impact of the Old Town School of Folk Music on the local and national scene has been truly remarkable. Six thousand three hundred and twenty-three students (as of November 1, 1967) have attended classes for as short a period as five weeks and for as long as five years. It is impossible to measure the enrichment in the lives of those who have attended classes. But of the following we can be sure. Hundreds of Chicago elementary and high school teachers are using the guitar and banjo in their school rooms as a direct result of having studied at “Old Town.” Our present and former students are teaching folk music in the following places:

South Bend Public Schools
Arlington Heights High School
Milwaukee Public Schools
Mt. Prospect High School
Berning School of Music, Chicago
Waukegan Public Schools
Meadowdale Academy of Fine Arts
Champaign Public Schools
Main Music, Wilmette
Kagan and Gaines, Chicago
Bernard Horwich Center, Chicago
New Triel-High School, Highland Park
Lyons, and Healy, Chicago and Evanston
Winnetka Community Center
Chicago Park District Recreational Programs
YMCA Adult Educational Program, Chicago
Northwest Music Center, Park Ridge
Ben Kiesly Music Studios, Chicago
J. Cechinni Music Studio, Chicago
Porter School of Music

While the school has always insisted that its main purpose was to give performing skills to amateurs (used in its best sense), a sizable number of former students have risen to local and national prominence as performers:

Heddy West  Jim McGuinn of “The Byrds”
Ginni Clemens  Fred Holstein
Valucha  Stu Ramsey
John Carbo  Mike Bloomfield