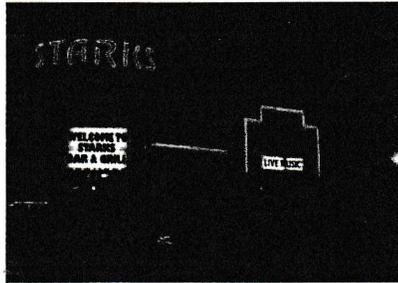


Eagan's Half Way House Comes to a Close

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Eagan has a long history of providing entertainment to residents and neighboring communities. One early locale that provided a longstanding source of entertainment was the Half Way House, located at 3125 Dodd Road in Eagan. Alexander Huard's Halfway House was the first business on the site. Built around 1865, it served as a combination dry goods store and a saloon. It served as a halfway point between St. Paul and the next stage-coach stop in Rosemount, which led to the "Half Way House" name. In 1885, Huard sold the business to Peter Langan. In the early 1910s, Peter's son, Richard, took over the business. On June 8, 1911, the Half Way House was one of three businesses in Dakota County raided by Sheriff Michael Murnane and Dakota County deputies.

The other two businesses were located at Nichols Station and Lake Avelon. Dakota County attorney Patrick Henry O'Keefe approved the raids, claiming that the businesses were selling liquor without a liquor license. Langan as well as James Scott of Nichols Station and A. C. Spangenberg of Lake Avelon were arrested and brought to Hastings, Minnesota. All three pleaded not guilty, posted bail for \$50, and were released. In 1924, the property was sold to the Joseph Schmidt Brewery Company. In 1930, George and May Hinze rented the Halfway House and renamed it the Dixie Inn. Patrons enjoyed square dancing and live music from local musicians such as Earl Schindeldecker and Adam Hack. It is believed that John Dillinger and members of Ma Barker's gang visited the Dixie Inn. An addition was built on the south-end of the original building before 1934. On September 9, 1935, the Dixie Inn was damaged in a fire that was reported to have started in a small shed adjacent to the building. Art Nelson was operating the hotel at the time. By 1945, the Dixie Inn had been renamed the Half Way House once again. Maynard Nelson operated the Half Way House, offering chicken and steak dinners on the menu. In 1959, the Joseph Schmidt Brewery Company sold the property. In 1963, John O'Brien—owner of the Lone Oak Supper Club—had the Lone Oak Supper Club physically moved from Westcott Road to the north-end of Half Way House and the business was renamed O'Brien's Half Way House shortly after. Years later the business was renamed Kelly's Half Way House until Gary Walter Starks purchased the business around August of 1974. Starks renamed the business Starks Half Way House. In 1978, a boardwalk and five different sets of steps made of rough cedar were added on the exterior to give Starks a western look. Construction was done by Vocon Construction, based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Patrons enjoyed live music, noon lunches, banquet facilities, a pool table room, Texas Hold'em, and square dancing. The COVID-19 pandemic facilitated the permanent closure of Starks in June of 2020, marking the end of an era. Demolition of the property in July of 2022.

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