



# INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT

## Rathskeller Bar

**Owner:** San Antonio Hermann Sons Home Association | **Association President:** Lori Todd

**Location:** San Antonio | **Original License:** Sept. 1, 1937

APRIL 2021

### How did you get your start in the alcoholic beverage industry?

The Hermann Sons fraternal lodges built our historic building in 1911, when they came together as a group of eight Hermann Sons lodges based in San Antonio. They formed the San Antonio Hermann Sons Home Association to provide a place where members could meet to do lodge business as well as congregate and enjoy fellowship. The lodge members enjoyed beer, so they opened the bar in the basement, which they called The Rathskeller, or “basement bar” in German.

### What makes your business unique?

Our bar has the oldest continuously-held beer license [in Texas], and the bar has not changed much since 1937. It is a time capsule, and all are welcome there. The building also houses our historic ballroom and now-closed 20-lane bowling alley, and we often give our customers tours!

### How are you dealing with the challenges your business has faced because of the COVID-19 pandemic?

We had to completely shut down for most of 2020 due to state [orders], as we do not serve food in our bar. This has been particularly challenging since we are a fraternal organization, and we hope to build up our business again soon.

### Do you have one story about your business that you'll never forget?

We can't point to just one memorable story over the years. What stands out in my mind is that every customer who wanders down the stairs to the basement to check out the bar is instantly surprised by the quaint, authentic feel. Customers walk around exploring old photographs and newspaper articles on the walls, including articles from the '30s that are touting our Carnival event as well as articles from the '60s that advertise George Jones playing live on the roof for just \$2. Treats and treasures are in store for those who explore the halls of the Hermann Sons.



### What are you looking ahead to?

We are looking forward to the members and local community joining us for a beer in the Rathskeller, and we hope to start our trivia nights again soon as well as many other fundraisers and community events.

### What's the one thing you would tell somebody who wants to work in this industry?

Consistency, creativity and communication are the key to building your business. But the key to keeping business is to treat your customers with the utmost respect and to make them feel at home.

— Lori Todd, Association President