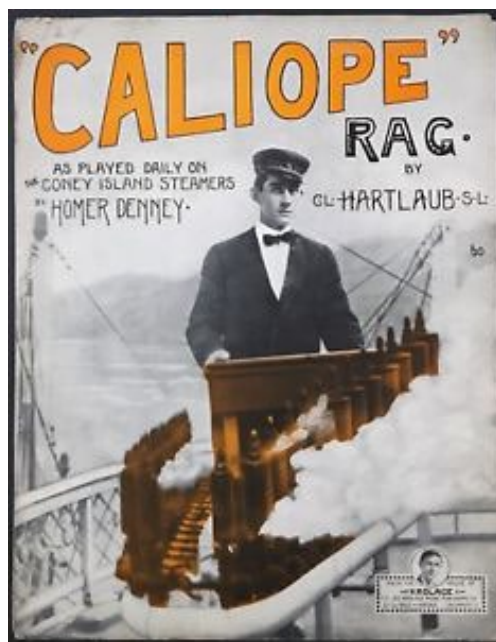


## The Calliope

- The calliope (KAL-ee-ohp) is also known as a steam organ or steam piano. In the age of steam, the calliope was used on riverboats and in circuses
- circus calliopes were mounted on a carved, painted and gilded wagon pulled by horses
- OR Ka-LYE-oh-pee
  - “Proud folk stare after me  
Call me Calliope  
Tooting joy, tooting hope  
I am the calliope”  
*19<sup>th</sup> c. rhyme*
- Calliopes are played at a keyboard – it usually has 32 whistles (vs 88-key piano)
- “Every finger has to push down eight pounds of steam to make a sound. I had strong fingers and it wasn’t hard for me”
- Denney, aged 80, was a guest at the first St. Louis Ragtime Festival in 1965, according to featured performer John Arpin (1936-2007), but he did not play due to hearing issues
- Ham Bones (1912)



## Homer Denney (1885-1975)

- ❖ born in Gallipolis, Ohio
- ❖ made his living on the Ohio River as a steamboat musician
- ❖ learned to play the piano as a child
- ❖ first steady job was playing the calliope, or steam organ, on a paddlewheel boat in 1901, aged 16
- ❖ worked most of his life on the *Island Queen* steam boat, which carried as many as 3,000 passengers
- ❖ self-published his first rag in 1905 in Cincinnati

