

Foremost Bicycle

Built by Murray Ohio Mfg. Co.

Lawrenceburg, Tennessee

Purchased: February 2024, \$368

From: Classic Eddys on eBay
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Brand: JC Penny

Model: Foremost Economy Middleweight (52 lbs)

As purchased from an estate sale.



Original Cost: \$38.88 in December 1966 catalog

Marked on original warranty paper that it was purchased on July 18, 1968 for \$22. This would imply that it was either used at the time or old stock on clearance.

Foremost: This was a Pennys brand made by Murray Ohio and sold under various names such as the Murray Meteor Flite (photo 2) and Sears Flightliner beginning in the Spring of 1958 (photo 1). There was also the Murray Comet (photo 3).

Murray History: The Murray Ohio Manufacturing Co. was founded in 1919 in Cleveland to make automobile parts. They branched out into bicycles in the 1930s and post-WWII offered lower cost models. Many were designed by Viktor Schreckengost (1906-2008) (photo 4), a prolific industrial designer.

In 1956, the company moved manufacturing to 100 Hicks St in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee with the corporate office in Brentwood. In the 1980s, they changed to cheaper models sold through department stores to try and keep business going despite less expensive imported competition.



In 1988, they were sold to British group Tomkins PLC, but by the late 1990s, all bicycle manufacturing ended due to Chinese imports.

Pennys: In the Fall of 1963, the Pennys catalog offered the "New" Foremost model bicycle (photo 1 & below). This matches the Murray Meteor Flite model from 1962 (photo 2). The deluxe model in photo 1 had a vertical piece between the front dual headlights with the Foremost name.



Ride Penneys Own New FOREMOST® Bicycles

FEATURE-PACKED MIDDLEWEIGHT HAS THESE EXTRAS:

- Twin headlights in tank
- Ball-bearing pedals
- Whitewall nylon cord tires
- Coil-spring saddle
- Luggage carrier
- Reflector

PENNEYS "FOREMOST" MIDDLEWEIGHT BICYCLE. Triple-bar cantilever frame. "Foremost" 1 1/4" whitewall nylon cord tires. Bright chrome-plated rims, brake, handlebars. Full-length chain guard. Ball-bearing pedals with durable black plastic treads. Two-tone saddle, waterproof top, coil-springs for greater comfort. Twin headlights mounted in custom-built head assembly. Reflector in rear. Kick-up parking stand. Coaster brake for fast stops. Durable flameboyant finish—red/white trim for boys, blue/white trim for girls. 26-in. model. No down payment—see page 671 for complete details about Credit Command.

N 927-0620 A—Boys'. Shipping weight 52 lbs. * 37.88
 N 927-0638 A—Girls'. Shipping weight 52 lbs. * 37.88

Same as above, but 24-in. model. No down payment.
 N 927-0646 A—Boys'. Shipping weight 48 lbs. * 37.88
 N 927-0653 A—Girls'. Shipping weight 48 lbs. * 37.88

ALL BICYCLES ON THIS PAGE AVAILABLE IN BOYS' AND GIRLS' MODELS

Bright-chromed rims

27.99

39.88

PENNEYS NEW "FORWARD" LOOK ON WHEELS

- Coaster brake
- Two-tone coil spring saddle.
- Bright chrome-plated fenders, rims, handlebars
- Whitewall nylon cord tires
- Luggage carrier

PENNEYS "FOREMOST" DELUXE BICYCLE. 26-in. model. Bright chrome-plated cantilever frame. Twin headlights in tank. Coaster brake for greater safety. Foremost 1 1/4" whitewall nylon cord tires. Rear reflector. Ball-bearing white pedals. Two-tone coil-spring saddle. Flameboyant finish—red for boys, turquoise for girls—white trim. No down payment with Credit Command—see page 671.

N 927-0588 A—Boys'. Shipping weight 52 lbs. * 39.88
 N 927-0596 A—Girls'. Shipping weight 52 lbs. * 39.88

Same as above, but 24-in. model. No down payment.
 N 927-0604 A—Boys'. Shipping weight 48 lbs. * 39.88
 N 927-0612 A—Girls'. Shipping weight 48 lbs. * 39.88

- Coaster brake for fast, easy stops
- Black nylon cord tires
- Penney value-price

PENNEYS "FOREMOST" BICYCLE. 26-in. model. Three-bar cantilever for boys, two-bar for girls. Waterproof, coil-spring saddle. Foremost 1 1/4" black nylon cord tires. Bright chrome-plated rims, handlebars. Ball-bearing pedals—with black treads. Chain guard screen. Kick-up parking stand. Coaster brake for safety. Reflector in rear. Baked enamel finish resists scratching, rust. Flameboyant finish—red for boys, blue for girls—white trim.

N 927-0661 A—Boys'. Shipping weight 49 lbs. * 27.99
 N 927-0679 A—Girls'. Shipping weight 49 lbs. * 27.99

Same as above, but 24-in. model.
 N 927-0687 A—Boys'. Shipping weight 44 lbs. * 27.99
 N 927-0695 A—Girls'. Shipping weight 44 lbs. * 27.99

PENNEY 833

* Not available—pay shipping charges on delivery. No down payment with Credit Command, months to pay—see page 671.

Spring 1964 Pennys catalog (photo 3)

December 1964 Pennys catalog (photo 4)

December 1965 Pennys catalog (photo 1). [This illustration is missing the vertical name between the lights, but this could be a less expensive model shown.]

Fall 1966 Pennys catalog (photo 2) shows the bike missing the vertical name.

December 1966 Pennys catalog (photo 3). This is the first appearance of what looks like a white seat and matches exactly with mine.



December 1967 Pennys catalog (photo 4) shows a new design for the more expensive model that first appeared in 1966.

I could not find a 1968 catalog, but by the Fall of 1969 (below), the rack and lights are gone. They have also dropped the Foremost brand name. In 1970, the curved frame was gone and replaced by a traditional triangle.



Dating my Foremost:

Since only the December 1966 catalog shows a white seat, I am assuming that this one dates to between late 1966 and late 1967. This also matches the "Foremost Economy Middleweight" model selling for \$38.88 in the Christmas 1966 catalog. It would have been made in the huge factory in Lawrenceburg (photo 1).

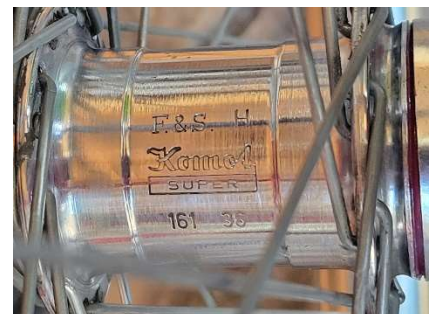
Another dating clue is that Murray moved the location of their serial number to the left rear drop in 1965, which this example has (photo 2, #999434). The 40x24 mark is for the front to rear gear ratio.

This came with the original paperwork including instructions for the lights marked "Revised 4/26/62", so it was certainly made after this date. The guarantee paper is marked, "Bike Purchased 7/18/68 for \$22." My guess at this point is that it was made in 1967 and not sold until 1968. Perhaps the low price compared to the catalog was for a clearance sale.



Even the tires & tubes are original on this and are marked with "Pennys" and "Foremost" (photo 5). The rims are stamped "M O Mfg Co" for Murray (photo 6).

The rear wheel has a Komet Super Coaster Brake 161 which was made in Germany by Fichtel & Sachs.



Some photos of the restored bike!

