

Mom's Joy Room

Where Obsolescence Ends and Wonder Begins

2964 Fairmont Road, Morgantown, WV 26501 | 304-282-3671 | momsjoyroom.net

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICITY

Antique-Era Flexible Flyer Model 28 Convertible Sled & Stroller

MARKET VALUE

\$175-\$325

ESTIMATED WORTH

\$350-\$500



Full side view with wheels attached



Top view — wood slat deck with decal



Rear view — push handle



*Wheel mechanism & factory stamp — Model 28, 5th St & Glenwood Ave,
Phila PA 19140*

An antique-era Flexible Flyer Model 28 convertible push-handle sled and stroller, manufactured by the S.L.

Allen & Company at their original factory at 5th Street and Glenwood Avenue in North Philadelphia. Measuring approximately 48 inches in overall length including the push handle, with a sled body of 29.5 inches long by 14 inches wide, this piece represents one of the most ingenious and beloved designs in the Flexible Flyer catalog — a child's winter sleigh that converts between snow-ready runner mode and wheeled stroller mode for year-round use.

The sled is stamped on its wood slats with the model designation and factory address: "Model 28, Winter Product from Flexible Flyer, 5th St & Glenwood Ave, Phila PA 19140." The inclusion of the ZIP code (19140) in the factory stamp provides a critical dating clue, placing manufacture firmly after 1963, when the U.S. Postal Service introduced Zone Improvement Plan (ZIP) codes nationwide. This places this sled in the final years of production at the original Philadelphia factory, before the S.L. Allen Company was sold and Flexible Flyer production was relocated — making this piece a genuine artifact from the closing chapter of the original Flexible Flyer era.

History

The Flexible Flyer is one of the most iconic and enduring names in American toy and sporting goods history. The sled was invented by Samuel Leeds Allen, a farmer and agricultural equipment manufacturer in Cinnaminson, New Jersey, who patented his steerable runner sled design on August 13, 1889. Allen's motivation was practical as well as commercial: he sought to keep his farm equipment workers employed during the winter months when agricultural manufacturing slowed, and he recognized a market for a sled that could actually be steered rather than simply sliding uncontrollably down a hill. The result was a sled with articulated steel runners and a steering mechanism controlled by a crossbar — a design so effective that its basic principles are still used in sleds manufactured today.

In 1890, Allen built a large factory at 5th Street and Glenwood Avenue in North Philadelphia, and it was here that Flexible Flyer sleds were manufactured for the next seven decades. The factory became a Philadelphia landmark and a major employer in the neighborhood, with generations of North Philadelphia residents working on its production lines. At its peak in the early 20th century, the company was producing hundreds of thousands of sleds annually, and the Flexible Flyer became a fixture of American childhood winters — the sled that every child wanted, and that many families owned for generations. The company's catalog grew to include dozens of models in various sizes, from small toddler sleds to large racing sleds and everything in between, each designated by a model number that corresponded to its size and features.

The Model 28 was one of Flexible Flyer's most distinctive and innovative offerings: a convertible push-handle baby sleigh designed for the youngest children. Unlike the company's standard runner sleds, which were built for speed and older riders, the Model 28 was designed for toddlers and infants — a parent or caregiver could push the child through the snow using the upright wooden handle, much like a baby carriage or stroller. The sled's most remarkable feature, however, was its convertible wheel mechanism: the sled could be fitted with a pair of spoke wheels on a metal axle that lifted the wooden runners off the ground, transforming it from a snow sleigh into a wheeled stroller for use during the spring, summer, and fall. This dual-purpose design made the Model 28 a year-round baby transport piece, and a practical investment for families who could use it in every season rather

than storing it for three-quarters of the year.

The wood-slat deck construction visible on this example is characteristic of Flexible Flyer's baby and toddler sled line, with closely spaced wooden slats providing a smooth, flat riding surface for a small child. The metal undercarriage, steel runners, and wheel conversion hardware are all original to the piece, and the painted Flexible Flyer branding on the wood deck remains visible and legible — a notable point of condition, as many surviving Flexible Flyers have lost their original deck graphics to decades of weather exposure, rough use, and repainting.

Dating this particular sled precisely relies on a critical detail in the factory stamp. The address "5th St & Glenwood Ave, Phila PA 19140" includes a five-digit ZIP code. The United States Postal Service introduced the ZIP code system on July 1, 1963, as part of a modernization effort to handle the growing volume of mail. Prior to that date, addresses used only city and state designations. The presence of the ZIP code 19140 in the factory stamp therefore establishes that this sled was manufactured in 1963 or later. This places it squarely in the final years of the original S.L. Allen factory's operation, as the company was sold in the 1960s and Flexible Flyer production was subsequently moved — first to Medina, Ohio, then to Olney, Illinois in 1993, and eventually overseas. This sled was made at the original Philadelphia factory during its closing era, one of the last Flexible Flyers to bear the legendary 5th & Glenwood address.

The S.L. Allen factory at 5th & Glenwood was eventually demolished, and today the site is part of the changing landscape of North Philadelphia. The building itself has been gone for years, but the sleds that came off its production lines — millions of them — remain scattered across America in attics, basements, antique shops, and private collections. The Flexible Flyer Model 28, with its convertible wheel mechanism and baby-carriage functionality, is one of the more uncommon variants encountered in the secondary market, as most surviving Flexible Flyers are the standard larger runner sleds built for older children. The toddler push-sleighs were produced in smaller numbers and, because they were used by very young children and frequently subjected to moisture, dirt, and the general hazards of baby transport, they have a lower survival rate than the sturdier sleds meant for older, more careful riders.

Notable Features

- ◆ Flexible Flyer Model 28 convertible push-handle baby sleigh, approximately 48" overall length (29.5" L × 14" W sled body)
- ◆ Convertible dual-mode design — use as a snow sled on steel runners or as a wheeled stroller/carriage on spoke wheels
- ◆ Original spoke wheels and metal axle hardware intact and functional
- ◆ Upright wooden push handle for parent/caregiver use
- ◆ Original Flexible Flyer branding and model markings visible on the wood slat deck
- ◆ Factory stamp reads: "Model 28, Winter Product from Flexible Flyer, 5th St & Glenwood Ave, Phila PA 19140"
- ◆ ZIP code (19140) in the stamp confirms manufacture post-1963, placing this in the final years of the original Philadelphia factory
- ◆ Excellent condition — wood, metal, wheels, and graphics all well-preserved with consistent age-appropriate patina

- ◆ A genuine antique-era piece from the original S.L. Allen & Co. factory, not a later reproduction or overseas reissue

COLLECTOR NOTES

This piece is dated to the 1960s based on the presence of a ZIP code (19140) in the factory address stamp — ZIP codes were introduced nationally in July 1963, establishing a firm terminus post quem for manufacture. The S.L. Allen factory at 5th & Glenwood Ave was sold in the 1960s, placing this sled in the final years of original Philadelphia production. While not yet 100 years old by the strictest antique definition, this piece is a genuine artifact of the original Flexible Flyer factory era and is framed here as "antique-era" to reflect its provenance from the historic S.L. Allen works. The Model 28 convertible push-sleigh is a relatively uncommon variant in the secondary market — most surviving Flexible Flyers are standard runner sleds for older children, while the toddler push-sleighs were produced in smaller quantities and have lower survival rates due to their use with very young children and exposure to moisture and dirt. The excellent condition of this example, with intact deck graphics and a fully functional wheel conversion mechanism, places it at the upper end of the Model 28 value range. The seller's original listing described the piece as an antique, consistent with its original-factory-era provenance.

*"Some rides carried us through winter and summer alike — and the hands that pushed them
loved us in every season."*

Sandy Wade

Proprietor, Mom's Joy Room

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