

Glen Leven farm is located just south of Woodmont Avenue on Franklin Road. A 65 acre farm there seems out of place, with cars whizzing by in the front and I-65 bordering the back of the property. It was a revolutionary war period land grant that remained in the family, and is grandfathered in as a farm because they kept cattle.

The buildings are old and well made. An old icehouse looks like a stone dungeon. A brick smokehouse and cold frame lead the way from the mansion to the old formal gardens that supplied produce for the Maxwell House Hotel a hundred years ago. Trees have grown so tall that it gets too much shade now for a garden.

A 3-acre paddock directly behind the old garden has a tree-lined fence around it. Past it sits an old barn that was filled with well-rotted manure and barn dirt, until I got involved. Late Sunday night I got the final go ahead, and by Monday morning I was looking for a welder to fix my manure spreader.

The farm has not been used much during the last 50 years, but must have been kept up very well in it's hey day. The owner lived in Dixon but made sure cattle grazed it enough to keep it as one of the few farms left in Davidson County. She willed it to the Tennessee Land Trust, an organization dedicated to preserving Tennessee farmland. One of their donors is the Hermitage Hotel. Their chef, Tyler, is one of our CSA members, and he wants to recreate the gardens to supply their restaurant. They hired me.

On the previous Thursday, Tyler and I met on the property and stirred barrel compost. I was in town to get another acre composted and plowed for the Bells Bend farm. By Sunday I had flagged four garden spots totaling a little more than an acre, and had lined up Zach to help with his bobcat and tractor.

Monday morning saw Glynn bringing my farm's plow and spreader, which busted a gear on the very first load. Luckily Zach had connections, and the Woods brothers welded the broken piece. They had worked on the farm bucking hay as kids, so I got a little dose of the farm's history.

Back at the barn we spent the rest of the day and the next morning with no problems. Forty

loads from the barn and ten from the lot yielded a nice black coat for the field and a small compost pile. We collected bags of leaves for the compost from across the street. Horn manure was stirred Sunday by Riley, followed by horn silica the next morning. Barrel compost was stirred again on Monday night.

By Tuesday afternoon it was time to plow. With Zach's 4610 Ford, I turned the sod over in low, low gear, taking about three hours to plow one acre. I believe in fifty tons of old composted manure and gentle tillage. Jim and Sarah came and helped build the compost pile, and stirred horn manure for an hour. Zach finished stirring and I sprinkled it on as the sun set.

The soil, although compacted, looks beautiful. I bet it hadn't been turned in fifty years or more. I'll put lime, other rock dusts, and wood ashes on it over the winter, and then rebreak it with a chisel plow next spring. We will need a deer fence, and some thinning of trees shrubs and overhanging branches will be necessary. Then I'll lay off cows and try to grow 20,000 pounds of vegetables. Glen Leven simply needs some good loving.