



# **Sermon at Deadman's Bend: A true story about the life of Reverend Hiram Enlow**

*Charles Rogers*

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In the opening years of the nineteenth century, south of Natchez, hidden away in a remote backwater named Deadman's Bend, a woman in her 20s found herself a widow, the mother of two small children. With fierce determination, she supported her family. On the waters of the great river and in the shade of the deep woods, her precocious son Hiram grew like a wild plant, with no schools and no churches. Soon enough, he learned how to catch a riverboat into Natchez. There he encountered ball room ladies, swindlers, gamblers, merchants, constables, and judges. When he was 17 years old, the boy Hiram learned carpentry from an Uncle. The Uncle's wife taught him polite conversation. He met a lovely young girl and moved to Wilkinson County to marry her. When his wife joined a Methodist Society, Hiram went along to please her. Soon he became convinced that his purpose in life was to preach the gospel. Contrary to the old adage, Hiram Enlow found acceptance among his own people. The unlettered and un-churched at Deadman's Bend and his neighbors in Wilkinson County revered him. The Methodists, however, had a tradition of academic preparation and a Book of Discipline. Hiram Enlow struggled for more than a decade to gain acceptance into the Methodist clerical hierarchy. He was loved and admired by those whom he served, but his academic deficiencies and his preaching style needed correction. He overcame his weaknesses and eventually received his church's recognition. The book is written as an historical novel. Each chapter is appended with meditation/discussion questions in the style of contemporary Christian spiritual literature. Additional features include the author's notes regarding the research and family history. The autobiography, poetry and essays of Hiram Enlow, long held as a private family heirloom, are included as an appendix.

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