

## Holland, Michigan Goes To War

Through Many Dangers Volumes 1-2 by P. M. Kuiper, illustrated by Paula Barone; Reformed Free Publishing; pb; 194 pages.

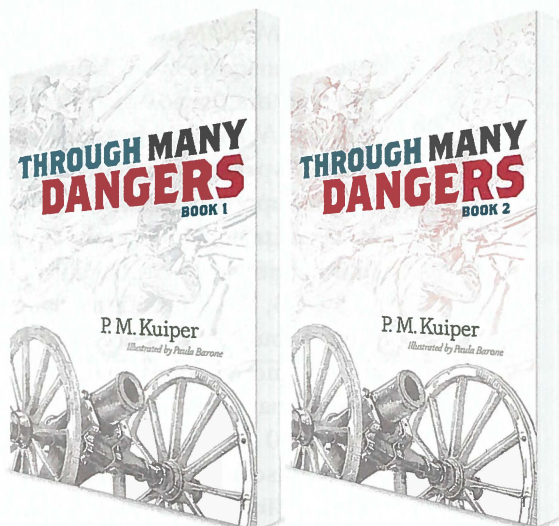
By JOHN VAN DYK

There are books aplenty for young children. Not as many for young people – good fictional stories for teens written from a Reformed perspective.

Writer P. M. Kuiper helps toward correcting that deficit with his story *Through Many Dangers* (Volumes 1 & 2) based on the American Civil War as seen and experienced through the eyes of a group of immigrants – Reformed young men from Holland, Michigan – an early Dutch settlement in the 1850s.

The young men were raised in solid Dutch Reformed families, and were members of a church led by pastor Rev. Albertus Van Raalte. With Van Raalte's strong encouragement, they sign up to fight for the Union. The two volumes penned by Kuiper and well illustrated by Paula Barone, take us through the war from August 1862 to July of 1865. While the books are based on historical events – there was a 25th Michigan regiment and the army leaders named in the story are accurate as are the battles fought, the young people serving as central characters, are fictional.

Throughout the story there are teaching moments aplenty. The young men are for the most part devout in their commitment to the faith, setting aside time for devotions together (prayer, Bible reading, psalm singing) as well as longing to return home, be with their families, and sit under their pastor's faithful preaching. Chapters alternate between the



life of soldiers in the field to letters sent to the folks back home anxious for any sliver of news from the front. The letter writer character, Harm, also sends home sketches of what he's seen along the way. Chapters share the drudgery of soldiering, exposure to the elements, the lack of provisions, the lack of supplies; the terror of battle and its often grim results. Those interested in the civil war will be particularly drawn. The writing while at first a bit stiff improves as events and the drama unfold. There is enough material to keep readers engaged and turning pages.

Also helpfully included are civil war battle timelines, and a section defining military terms.

Both author and artist are members of the Protestant Reformed Churches and both offer unique talents in terms of research, writing and artistic ability that helps carry these two volumes to their desired and satisfying end.

The books are published by Reformed Free Publishing Association. Recommended. ♦