

CHAPTER XL.

THE CHURCHES.

The religious history of the city of Grand Rapids has kept pace with the rapid increase of the population and the extension of the city. The increase in the number of church societies has been about thirty per cent, in the last sixteen years. From its earliest settlement the churches have exerted a decided influence in forming the character of the community. The edifices with few exceptions are modest structures, but commodious and tasteful and in their ample accommodations and fine equipments quite comport with the tastes and needs of the people. In estimating the religious status of the city, comparisons with that of other cities are largely in favor of Grand Rapids. The number of churches here represented is quite remarkable and shows that the residents of the City are stanch friends of the church. All of the mixed population are provided with adequate church privileges, and, with a considerable diversity of demoninations represented here.

Seventh Day Adventists—22 Cass Ave.—On the first of May, 1886, a mission was established in this city under the Superintendency of Elder H. W. Miller. The work was begun with six Bible-readers, whose number increased to twenty-five during the first year. A course of scriptural study was pursued in the Training School at the "mission" house, then and for two years at 194 Sheldon street, and six were educated and sent abroad. Encouraged by this successful commencement, the State Conference held its large annual Camp Meeting here that year, beginning Sept. 17. In August, 1887, Elders Van Horn and Wales were commissioned to hold a series of meetings here, which assembled in a large tent on the west side of South Division street, between First and Second avenues. These continued for six weeks, with a large attendance, and won a considerable number to this faith, in consequence of which a church was organized with about forty constituent members. They held their regular worship and Sabbath School at Ringuette's Hall, southeast corner Fifth avenue and South Division street, until May 5, 1889,