

CRAMMED IN MUSEUM

The House granted the \$400,000, which appears assured of Senate approval. Paintings, ceramics, prints, and sculptures of the collection now are crammed among the stuffed elephants and plaster Eskimos of the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum. The collection, with a board of its own, accommodates native artists by exhibiting their works in the foyer. History, not art, sets the mood of this museum.

The National Portrait Gallery still has no board of its own. But it has been a favorite concept, if not an organ, of the Smithsonian for a century. The Clark collection of portraits of Americans of the 18th and 19th centuries by prominent American artists has been envisioned as the nucleus of a national portrait gallery. Most of the Clark paintings are stored in the basement of the National Gallery of Art, which displays work—mostly European—primarily of artistic rather than historical interest.

Although many of the works in the portrait collection are considered of finer quality than those of the fine arts collection, history, not art, sets their mood.

It is this conflict between artistic and historical art that disturbs the Art League.

PORTRAITS WOULD GAIN

And the Smithsonian's predisposition for history and science instead of art is the real danger league members see in a new bill introduced by powerful Senators Anderson, Democrat of New Mexico, and Saltonstall, Republican of Massachusetts. Both are regents of the Smithsonian.

At the request of the Smithsonian, they sponsored legislation to create a board, controlled by Smithsonian Regents, for the National Portrait Gallery. This board could use "the whole or any part" of the Patent Building for the Portrait Gallery.

Should the board decide to use "the whole" the National Portrait Gallery would squeeze the National Collection of Fine Arts right out of the Old Patent Building, League President Francis Peters reasoned.

Yet, the building is eminently suited for a gallery to show off and to improve the quality of American art, the league is convinced. An architectural treasure itself, the building is to be transferred to the Smithsonian under a 1958 law when its present occupant—the Civil Service Commission—vacates. The CSC is due to move into a new building in 1963.

American Architect Robert Mills, who designed the Washington Monument and the Treasury Building, fashioned the Old Patent Office Building in Greek revival style. The two-block site downtown, bounded by Seventh, Ninth, F and G Streets NW., was set aside in the L'Enfant plan of 1791 for an "American Pantheon."

FEARS CALLED UNFOUNDED

Senator Anderson said the league fears were unfounded. It would be impractical to section off the Patent Building, one-half for the collection and another for the Portrait Gallery, he said.

He cited language in the congressional reports on the 1958 transfer law saying that the Patent Building would be used for both collections.

Hardened by past disappointments, the league has yet to be convinced. Members have thrown their support instead behind a bill sponsored by Senator Humphrey, Democrat of Minnesota, creating a Portrait Gallery Board headed by the Chairman of the Board of the National Collection. Further, the Humphrey bill would limit Portrait Gallery occupancy of the Patent Building to half of the space.

Cosponsors of the Humphrey bill are Democratic Senators Williams of New Jersey and Long of Missouri and Representative McDowell of Delaware.

LAW SEEN NEEDLESS

Some league members feel no legislation is required at all.

Congress in a 1938 resolution called for establishment of a suitable gallery for national collections of "fine arts, comprising paintings, sculptures, bronzes, glass, porcelain, tapestry, furniture, jewelry, and other types of art." Also, the gallery would house portraits of eminent Americans and exhibit works of artists deserving recognition, the resolution said.