Captain Lyman Allyn (1797–1874), the Museum’s namesake, spent his early career at sea, pursuing whales out of the port of New London as a sailor and then a captain. By the time this portrait was painted, he had become an agent managing a fleet of ships, with investments in other areas as well. The artist who painted this portrait, Nahum Ball Onthank, was originally from New London. Largely self-taught, he found success as a portraitist and moved his studio to Boston.