

DISTANT RELATIONS

ing privileges at Hartford from
on married Ann, the daughter
m had come to Hartford with
started a family, which would eventually
Lord's brothers was Dr. Thomas
in Connecticut. Another brother
ton's, and the two were licensed
a period of twelve months in 1644
ort lived – two years later Richard
and making threats against Stanton
he Indians.²⁶
glish. Thomas Stanton included
and relative peace. The Pequots
their land, scrambled to survive
to resist annihilation. Meanwhile
savored to stake out their positions
on of the Pequots.

CHAPTER

8

Ambassador to the Indians

As fur trader, interpreter, and a man of public affairs, Thomas Stanton was now very busy. "He himself appears to have been always upon the wing, yet always within call," as the historian Frances Caulkins described him. His influence only increased in 1643, when the colonies of Plymouth, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Haven formed a federation called the United Colonies of New England and appointed Thomas Stanton as Interpreter-General of New England. "From 1636 to 1670," Caulkins writes, "his name is connected with almost every Indian transaction on record."¹

It was during this period that he acquired his reputation as "friend to the Indians," and it is worth pondering the significance of this appellation. In what ways was friendship possible between a seventeenth-century Englishman in a position of power and an indigenous American, or, to put it bluntly, between a colonizer and someone who was trying to avoid being colonized? What was the nature of his numerous and various interactions with aboriginal people?

The first thing to consider is that, as the main conduit for aboriginal people in complicated negotiations over land purchases, boundary adjustments, trade treaties, war alliances, and the arbitration of disputes between rival chiefs, he was not a man to get on the wrong side of. Some gestures of friendship on the part of Native Americans undoubtedly were politically