This is a transcript of a recording made on September 30, 1986 of a conversation with Avis Flagg Setkewich by Lois Barnes..

Lois Barnes 00:06
Oral History for Friends of Quabbin. Okay, your name is?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 00:21
Avis Flagg Setkewich

Lois Barnes 00:23
And you were born. Where you were born? Ware, Mass, but your family lived in Dana and Dana, where, where and where, in Dana

Avis Flagg Setkewich 00:38
On the road to Greenwich

Lois Barnes 00:42
On the road to Greenwich,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 00:44
That would be south of town, I believe.

Lois Barnes 00:47
So you were born in North Dana. No, you weren't born in North Dana. You

Avis Flagg Setkewich 00:53
Ware, I was born in Ware, and my folks lived in Hardwick at the time,

Lois Barnes 00:57
All right? And then, when did your family move to Dana

Avis Flagg Setkewich 01:02
When my sister Edna, she's a year older than I am. When it was time for her to start school, she was six years old.

Lois Barnes 01:12
And we use the you the or the how much to the oldest you're next to the oldest, your oldest,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 01:20
Edna, then myself. And then there was my brother, Junior, he was born, in Ware also, and then Barbara, Joseph, Barbara, Billy, Ira, Marshall, Dana and Mary were all born in quote,

Lois Barnes 01:40
So how many were there in your family? 15 ? In your family? Oh, dear. And who was what was your mother's name?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 01:50
Rachel Eliza Alan Flagg,

Lois Barnes 01:52
And your father's name was Ava Daryl Flagg and so you you were probably only a few years old, and when you moved to North Dana,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 02:04
I'd say four.

Lois Barnes 02:07
Now, I know you have some some memories about going to school. Can you tell me a little bit about your first day at school?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 02:17
My first day? Well, I remember a lot about my writing with my left hand, and Miss Helen Doane was really against that she went to see my folks, and every time she turned her back to me, I'd have it back in my left hand. But I was smart enough to turn my paper the opposite way so that I always had good penmanship, but I think she gave in on me. She couldn't do anything to make me write with my right hand.

Lois Barnes 02:55
So do you remember how far was it from your home to yours to the school.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 03:08
It was quite a way. It was all the way through town,

Lois Barnes 03:11
all the way through North Dana.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 03:13
All the way through and we turned at Hager's store, turned left at Hager's store, went down over the railroad track and up the hill.

Lois Barnes 03:21
Okay, can you, can you sort of reconstruct for me, your your way of what you did on your way to school, where you what you remember about it?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 03:35
Yeah. Well, we started out there was on my walks to school. We went by my father's barn, yeah, where he kept his milk and cows. And then Sam Ramsey lived on the other side in a little home he had, and we walked up the hill, and Denise Schuler lived on the same side we did on the right. And there were a few other people in there that I really don't

Lois Barnes 04:16
You don't remember, just remember what you'd

Avis Flagg Setkewich 04:20
cross the street after the last house. I'd say there were two houses after the Schuler's. Then we crossed the street to the left, and we walked all the way up where it was all field. And then we came to the Goodman's house. And we always looked at the windmill to see how the wind was blowing.

Lois Barnes 04:37
Okay, this, this was a windmill. And they pumped water with it, oh yes, and made electricity, that's right.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 04:46
And my uncle Irie lived in that section with his wife, Jenny, and from there on, it was all maple trees all the way up the street. Mm, hmm. It was beautiful. Yeah, a whole way into the sidewalk.

Lois Barnes 05:03
Were they sugar maples?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 05:05
Oh yeah, they were all sugar maples, they have sap running in the fall. (You mean, in the spring, in the spring) yeah, early in the spring. And my sister and I were talking about this couple weeks ago, how we used to try it, yeah. But yeah, it was, it was beautiful up through there. We went by the library the, (doctors. Who was the

doctor? Do you remember what his name was?) I always thought it was Dr Seeger, but no, yeah, so I don't know who it was, a Sawtelle, possibly, don't know,

Lois Barnes 05:50
Yeah, but you remember going to him? No, my mother went to someone in Orange yeah. Oh, your mother went to someone in Orange, and that was quite common in your area.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 06:00
I remember Catherine Austin. Really good. Who's Catherine Austin? She was our school nurse. She came from Belchertown, and after she left Quabbin, then she was the district nurse in Chicopee. Yeah, very nice woman.

Lois Barnes 06:19
Now, did she drive all the way out to Dana for is the school nurse. And how often did she come? You don't remember how often she came?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 06:30
I remember our TB test. Yeah, yeah.

Lois Barnes 06:37
You know, what did your father do for work?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 06:39
He worked in the Swift River Box Company, and he worked for Charlie Baxter in the woods, cutting the wood that they used in that box company.

Lois Barnes 06:51
Oh, really, he helped help with that. Did he have horses and cows and farm?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 06:57
He had cows and he always had a big garden with all the vegetables on the side of the road, and he was always busy. He would,

Lois Barnes 07:10
Yeah, do you remember when he had other animals besides cows, or did he only have cows?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 07:15
No, I don't. Don't remember.

Lois Barnes 07:17
He don't remember. So how long did you go to the Dana school? Did you go all the way through?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 07:28
No, I went four years,

Lois Barnes 07:30
Four years. And when did you start school there? What was the year you started?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 07:39
I think '32 And I remember the music teacher saying, when you grow up, we're not going to be riding around in cars, we're going to be flying in airplanes.

Lois Barnes 07:54
And sure enough, she was right, yeah,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 08:00

But we had took our lunches to school. We had lunch. We'd hurry and get to school in the morning in the winter, and we'd slide down the hill on the cardboards. I remember Donald and David Holland so good, and Ruthie and Franklin and Eva Doubleday and Norman Tandy,

Lois Barnes 08:20
What were the kinds of games you played at school?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 08:24
Oh, we had swing sets. He has marbles. He played marbles. You play baseball at all. No, no,

Lois Barnes 08:34
But you remember playing marbles? How about hopscotch? Oh, yeah, hopscotch. How about any kind of, any other kinds of games during recess? Did you play? I really don't remember what, what they were. Do you remember skating at all? Or No, I never skate. You never skated. What did you do? You did slide. You did slide in the wintertime. Yeah. So were you close to the river? There? Did you swim in the river? Or where did you swim?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 09:08
We were on the branch of the West Branch of the West Branch, that's where we swam.

Lois Barnes 09:13
And you did swim there a lot?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 09:16
We walk up through the pasture. We swim down there. We call the river, which is the river. And my father cut wood all down. In this way

Lois Barnes 09:32
He cut wood, and what is south of where you lived, all in that area. And how long did? Did he continue to didn't the box shop eventually get bought by the MDCW wasn't by 1932 they were already buying up houses and businesses in Dana.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 09:58
I think it was in '35 or '36 they transferred it to Athol.

Lois Barnes 10:03
And did your father transfer to Athol at that time?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 10:09
And he worked all those years in the box company. My Uncle Ira used to my great uncle drove the truck to the apple boxes.

Lois Barnes 10:21
Oh, so that's what was made in the box. Were there other boxes?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 10:25
Apple boxes? All I know is

Lois Barnes 10:27
My father was an apple farmer, so we probably got his boxes from there too. You said you, I was trying to identify from the map. You didn't live very far from my grandfather's house, right? Where did you on the Doubledays? Doubledays, yeah, how far were you from there?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 10:48
Well, there were Doubledays that lived,

Lois Barnes 10:50

Oh, in the center of town, but we were, we were out in North Dana, yeah.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 10:58
We weren't very far. No, we were, would be a nice walk to get there, yeah, but he had cows.

Lois Barnes 11:06
Yes, oh yes, lots of cows. Yeah, that's why I was wondering how many cows your father had, if he had a lot

Avis Flagg Setkewich 11:12
or only, no, my father didn't sell milk

Lois Barnes 11:19
With a big vegetable garden. Now, you remember the railroad tracks and anything about the trains there, and did you walk along the railroad tracks to school.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 11:41
Oh yes, we'd go up just to go by my father's shop. Uh huh, oh,

Lois Barnes 11:45
so that you could see his job. And do you remember trains coming along the railroad

Avis Flagg Setkewich 11:52
Not while we were walking, I think it was after they they took the train out and they had all of the boards, the railroad ties taken out. All the wood was rails.

Lois Barnes 12:04
So that the train wasn't really, the Rabbit Train wasn't really running still when you were there, or,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 12:13
Oh, it was when I was there, yeah, was when you were there, when we used to play around the tracks. It was

Lois Barnes 12:17
they had taken into dynamic. Yeah, right, they were already beginning to pull them up, yeah,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 12:23
but we were really daring. We'd walk over those tracks, right over that river

Lois Barnes 12:30
I know, or any rails, or any very dangerous business. That's why I was wondering if there were, if there were any trains on the track.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 12:39
But we used to go down to Lincoln's and pick cranberries in the cranberry bogs.

Lois Barnes 12:45
In the cranberry you remember the cranberry bogs? Yeah, we'd pick bags full and bring them back. And what would you do with them? Would you use them at home, or would you sell them?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 12:54
My mother used them, and my cousin came up from Chicopee, Mary Slade, and she'd buy some of them, but there were a lot of berries there. We learned our checkerberries and our blueberries, the strawberries. So we picked

Lois Barnes 13:14
wild strawberries.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 13:15
We thought were wild, yeah, right, but we kind of wandered off the edge of the road, and they weren't real ones. They were someone else's. But of course, she told us, with a smile that they were hers, yeah, as long as she wasn't scolding us, yeah, we didn't believe her.

Lois Barnes 13:36
So you pick strawberries along the road.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 13:38
And we sold seeds for school to help with the money for school, we always enjoy that we got to talk to everyone

Lois Barnes 13:53
And how old did you say you were when you left, when your father moved out of...

Avis Flagg Setkewich 13:58
I was going on 11.

Lois Barnes 13:59
You were going on 11. So you, you, your memories are... No, it's gonna be 12 in July. We moved into, yeah, So you, you, but you have fond memories of Quabbin, and you keep going back. You keep going back to Quabbin. And, Oh, yes. Do you remember this, this race track at all. Do you remember where that was in relation to your house?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 14:27
That was south. There was some not that

14:30
too far.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 14:33
No, it's on. We called it the Woodside Trotting Park.

Lois Barnes 14:44
Oh Yes, uh huh. It was called the Woodside Trotting Park. Do you remember ever seeing any... we lived here...Yeah, okay, okay, I see now.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 14:56
And this is where your grandfather

Lois Barnes 14:59
That's a. No, that, yeah, that's the sawmill. I think that's the sawmill.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 15:03
Yeah. So if you went down through the woods, it wouldn't be that far.

Lois Barnes 15:12
Do you remember doing that at all? And were they, was it still in operation when you were there, or were they no longer operating as a racing track. No, there were no no horses or anything there at the time. Yeah,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 15:34
A lot of my history was picked up from hearsay, but we used to get the key and go back into Quabbin, and I'd go in, like, for a while, I went in the back of the homes, the soda halls, and we'd pick up bottles, and I've got the names of the people that own that house underneath that bottle. And I took some up and showed them to my mother, and she didn't think that there were any cellar halls open. Oh, really. Sh e thought they were all covered over

Lois Barnes 16:07
I thought they were, well, I don't think they were in that area. In most areas, they were covered over.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 16:12
In Dana, they're big, 10 by 10 and 10 by 12. Well foundations underneath the house. They're still all open.

Lois Barnes 16:22
Yeah, oh, yeah. That's very interesting. Do you remember any remember anything about Soapstone at all? The Soapstone Hill that was up in the back there?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 16:33
I remember it. I remember feeling the soapstone from there.

Lois Barnes 16:37
Do you remember climbing up the hill that was quite, quite a good sized hill?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 16:44
Well, we climbed a lot of hills. Yeah, right. This is, I was thinking of the Doubledays up here. Well, we'd walk in this way when we got the key, and of course, the Metropolitan Police would check and make sure that everyone was out by dark, because we had to return the keys. And I did say, Gee, it's getting so low the water, maybe we can all move back in. And he didn't like that.

Lois Barnes 17:15
So, yes. So you remember what you remember it's being very low. You remember the steps that go down, the steps that go down,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 17:25
But we were still there when they were dynamiting. The trees were all cut down. And my father went back after we moved out, and he took down a house and built his home.

Lois Barnes 17:34
That's interesting. Do you remember whose house it was that they took down? No, I don't. Was it from Dana, or was it, it was from Dana and you rebuilt? Did you rebuild it in the same way? Or it was a build into a different kind of house...different because there were so many children...and where did you build it?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 17:56
But it was up near the house we took down. Was up near Doane's, my teacher's,

Lois Barnes 18:02
And where did, where was that? Was that in Dana center? Or was that North Dana?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 18:08
Was just past the center. It was just past the center on here someplace.

Lois Barnes 18:13
And it was one of these, probably one of these houses here.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 18:17
And he split the wood and the lumber from the house, and like his cousin, Fred Slate, built himself a little two room place so he could sleep during the day out there where it was quiet in Chicopee, but we were down there with our crowbars.

Lois Barnes 18:35
Oh, yes, everything probably, probably. So how old were you that you must have been in your teens,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 18:51

But we had a long lunch hour

Lois Barnes 18:55
And at school, you mean, yeah, a long lunch hour at school...oh yeah... And so what did you do during, you know? What did you do at lunch time, recess time too.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 19:05
We played games, or if it was right, yeah, play cards, do different guessing games and things like that.

Lois Barnes 19:13
We used to have a game we called Quaker Meeting. Did you ever play that? See how long you can keep quiet. The first one was oh, the first one who said anything had to pay off (??)

Avis Flagg Setkewich 19:28
My brother, the one younger, the year younger than me, he got infantile paralysis, they call it. And after he had that cast on. He had to be he took that they took that off, and he had to take the bus to school. So we rode on the bus with him.

Lois Barnes 19:49
Yeah. Well, by that time, yeah, like you preferred walking, I guess, oh yeah, it was much more fun walking. I. So what did you do in the summertime? That was vacation time. Do you remember?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 20:05
Oh, we'd swim and sell vegetables.

Lois Barnes 20:08
Had a big work in the children.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 20:11
I remember wash, standing on the chair and washing the dishes.

Lois Barnes 20:14
Yeah, so there was electricity in a lot of Dana. Did you have electricity in your house or not? You don't remember. Do you remember about...

Speaker 1 20:25
We much have, I don't remember any lanterns or lamps.

Lois Barnes 20:32
You remember? Remember getting water without having to pump it. So you had a pretty comfortable house you live in compared with some of the other because a lot of the other towns didn't have any electricity,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 20:47
And in 36 during the flood, they had someone standing out there right at the curve of the river to watch make sure the water didn't come up into the house while we were sleeping at night.

Lois Barnes 21:00
When was? When was this in '30 that was in '36 that was in '36 You were already moved, okay, so, yes, I remember there were heavy floods throughout the area in '36 so that, so that, that was pretty exciting, I guess, for for all the kids. In '38 we were in Athol.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 21:23
Well, it was we knew my father wasn't going to come home. He couldn't make it over the road.

Lois Barnes 21:28

Oh, he couldn't make it home, so he had to stay on the other side of the river. Did you have other family that lived near you in the area or not, we're there.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 21:45
I don't know of anyone. You don't were related my great uncle Ira Slate,

Lois Barnes 21:52
And he did live in the village. And do you know where your mother came? Was her family from Hardwick, or was her family from?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 22:05
No, she was born in Royalton, Vermont. Oh, she was so she came, but she got married in in New Salem, North, New Salem and they lived in Prescott. Oh, you, they first got married (Oh, really) So she could really tell you a lot what I could,

Lois Barnes 22:19
Yeah, I love to talk to her, because, of course, my family lived in Prescott when I was when I was young, and I'd like to see gets, get some, some sense of what it's like. You mentioned the O'Briens. Do you remember the O'Briens in North Dana?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 22:37
They lived down below the schoolhouse, too. I remember them very good, nice people.

Lois Barnes 22:45
So did you visit them? You go in and visit them? (Oh, yes) Did they have a large family or not? Was it?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 23:02
I think there were two or three children, but we were around the age of Norman Tandy and, you know, like Franklin, and Ed Canyon (sp?).

Lois Barnes 23:19
So how many you were, you were left-handed. Were the other left handers in your school?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 23:23
Yes, Norma Foster was when I was in third grade, and she came into the first she was left-handed. So, I helped her write. When the teacher would put her hand on yours to write the different things, well, I'd do it with her left hand.

Lois Barnes 23:44
So you, so you helped out with, with teaching, teaching left handers how to write. That's, I know a lot of teachers at that time didn't, didn't really approve of children writing with their left. Now it's quite the opposite, and now they...

Avis Flagg Setkewich 24:02
How easy she's got it, but I'm teaching her how to write. Yeah, writing. But my folks were strict. We were really brought up good.

Lois Barnes 24:17
Did you and what church did you go to? Did you go to a church? And

Avis Flagg Setkewich 24:19
We went to the Methodist Church. I believe it was the Methodist right on the corner of East Street.

Lois Barnes 24:25
And was that in North Dana, or Dana (In North Dana). And did you go to Sunday school? Oh, yes, every Sunday morning, then we'd come home. What did you? What did you you come over to Sunday school and go swimming

summer, yeah. Did you, do you remember what you had for Sunday dinner? Did you have Sunday dinner in the middle of the day?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 24:56
Oh, yeah. So, we have company. We. My mother always made a big dinner. She's a real good cook.

Lois Barnes 25:04
So you thought you said your father didn't have horses, so you must have been he must have had a truck or a car to get around. Do you remember anything about

Avis Flagg Setkewich 25:14
they could have had a horse? I believe he did. After he went to Athol he had a horse. So, he had an old car, but I don't remember what kind it was. (Yeah, you don't remember how, how you went around) I don't even know if it was ever registered. I remember sitting in the back, but he always had a big garden.

Lois Barnes 25:39
And did your mother do all the canning and so forth? So, you did you help out with that, or you helped out taking care of the other children?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 25:50
That was more like it was a lot of them younger than us.

Lois Barnes 26:06
So, there was one thing I was going to ask you about. You mentioned joining the Girl Scouts.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 26:15
We had to go to North Dana for that. I mean, excuse me, we had to go to Dana Center.

Lois Barnes 26:21
Dana center, and how many? How many children were there in there? Were there many or just a few?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 26:29
By then,I think there were about 12.

Lois Barnes 26:40
And what were some of the activities that you did in Girl Scouts? Do you remember?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 26:46
Well, we learned all our Girl Scout laws, but we did go out through the woods and they'd mark different trees or the ground, and we'd follow the trail. I remember that, but not too much about what we did. Of course, we felt big because we were in the Girl Scouts. We weren't little babies anymore.

Lois Barnes 27:14
And you (??). You were almost on the river there. Did you do any, any fishing?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 27:20
Oh, yes, we used to go fishing with Johnny Ricky, and he'd take us out in the boat.

Lois Barnes 27:25
Oh, you go out in the boat. You wouldn't fish offshore. He had a boat.

27:28
He did the fishing we watched. (You just watched)

Avis Flagg Setkewich 27:31

I guess I kind of watched fish hooks around us. But he'd smoke his pipe there and fish and the boat would kind of go by itself,

Lois Barnes 27:47
just float down the river, just

Avis Flagg Setkewich 27:49
sitting there, talking and visiting.

Lois Barnes 27:53
And did he live close to you? Or,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 27:56
Oh, yes, almost across the street, just at an angle. Hmm, do you remember Ruthie Fair's father was the janitor

Lois Barnes 28:12
at the school, and if

Avis Flagg Setkewich 28:15
anyone was sick, he got to drive them home. Oh, really,

Lois Barnes 28:19
were you ever sick? (Yes) so you had to be driven home,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 28:26
but Ruthie was about three years older than me. We were always good friends.

Lois Barnes 28:32
You always in the same same school. (Oh yes), yeah, You're still good friends?

Speaker 2 28:32
Oh yes, visit her all winter in Florida,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 28:42
But we had the first, second, third and fourth downstairs, and then Miss Horan taught the upstairs, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth, and then it was into high school out of town.

Lois Barnes 28:56
So yeah. So where did people in Dana go to high school? Some went to Athol, so you would not yet gone to high school by the time you left. (No) Yeah, so that's interesting about the school. And you were only in the you were in the downstairs, and you never did get up to the upstairs,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 29:09
Some of them went to New Salem. No, only on a rainy day, when we had recess, we'd get up here with the big ones.

Lois Barnes 29:29
Oh, you got to get together with the big kids on rainy days. Was that fun?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 29:39
The older ones, I should

Lois Barnes 29:40
say not the big ones. Yeah. So. We do, yeah,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 30:01

After school, we run up and get our kerosene can filled for my mother.

Lois Barnes 30:02
Oh, up at the store. Which store did you go to? Double? Oh, you went to the garage. Flaggs. Garage. Was it? And was Flagg related to you

Avis Flagg Setkewich 30:16
Branched off a few generations?

Lois Barnes 30:18
Yeah that wasn't really close. I wondered if you were remaining because I knew there was a garage.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 30:22
I've done all that genealogy, and it's branched off.

Lois Barnes 30:28
Do you remember the stores in Dana? Weren't there a couple? (I remember Hager store). And did you go there for groceries?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 30:36
Well, he delivered them. He delivered on Friday. Always bring us penny candy when he came. We'd stop in there and get things for my mother.

Lois Barnes 30:46
Just don't get penny candy. Oh yeah,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 30:49
We had the post office and everything. It was a soup to nuts store.

Lois Barnes 30:54
Do you remember the Doubleday store? Also wasn't there a Doubleday store further on,

Avis Flagg Setkewich 31:00
It was before we got, before you got was right on the corner of East Street. It was a good big block.

Lois Barnes 31:08
Do you remember what kind of a store that was?

Avis Flagg Setkewich 31:11
I don't remember. I don't know if they were still open when we...

Lois Barnes 31:14
Maybe they were closed by the time we were there, but you remember that there was a store there.

Avis Flagg Setkewich 31:23
Then depot street. They had the the railroad depot.

Lois Barnes 31:31
And was that and people were still using the trap.

Recording ends at this point