School children have been collecting friends' signatures in autograph books since the mid-19th century. With the coming of motion pictures and movie stars, fan magazines appeared and people began writing to celebrities for autographs. Pittsburgher James Verner Scaife, Jr., born in 1903, wrote to a number of celebrities and received autographed photographs and letters from greats and notables, including (clockwise from left) William S. Heart, Constance Talmadge, Charlie Chaplin, Dorothy Gish, C.E. Rosendahl, and Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

Scaife's parents, James Verner Scaife and Mary Magee Scaife, were part of Pittsburgh's original manufacturing elite, which began producing copper, tin, and sheet iron in Pittsburgh in 1802. The James Verner Scaife, Jr. collection was donated by relative Curtis Scaife.