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## **MCKESSON COMPANY: THE LARGEST AND THE OLDEST\***

McKesson Corporation is both the largest wholesale distributor in the United States and the oldest. Its history dates back 181 years, when John McKesson and Charles Olcott founded McKesson in 1833 in New York City. The company was founded to import and sell therapeutic drugs and chemicals. It quickly started stocking the medicine chests aboard trade ships with pharmaceutical drugs imported from Europe, and started selling medicinal herbs, roots, and spices from Pennsylvania Shaker colonies. In 1853, the company was renamed McKesson & Robbins. By then, the company was distributing pharmaceutical products by covered wagon to 17 states and territories across America, from Vermont to California.<sup>8</sup>

In 1855, McKesson & Robbins became one of the first wholesale firms to manufacture drugs. In the early 1900s, McKesson & Robbins persuaded several well-established wholesalers to become its subsidiaries, forming a national drug wholesaling company and becoming the leading distributor of pharmaceutical drug products in the United States (Figure 5.2).



**FIGURE 5.2**

McKesson & Robbins headquarters, post-1853. (From McKesson. With permission.)

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\* The following is a summary of the history of McKesson Corporation from its website.