John J. McDonough, Sr., was born in Cincinnati on July 7, 1910. The son of Irish immigrants, he realized the value of education and worked his way through the Cincinnati College of Pharmacy, graduating in 1931. As a pharmaceutical representative, he began his career working for E.R. Squibb Company in 1936 and later joined Warner-Chilcott Laboratories (now Parke-Davis).

In 1941, he married Elizabeth Ann Donovan, who was born in Ludlow, Kentucky, in 1915. Elizabeth, herself from a strong Irish heritage, was also a firm believer in education. She graduated from Littleford-Nelson School of Business in 1936 and went to work for Prudential Insurance.

Their marriage produced five children: Jack (Hand Surgeon), Mary (Software Engineer, Lockheed-Martin Corporation, Retired), Jane (Police Detective, Montgomery County, Maryland, Retired), Jim (Commander, U.S. Navy, Retired), and Tim (Vice-President and Director of Communications and Public Affairs, The American Council of Education). John, who was Federal Sales Manager for Warner-Chilcott in Washington, D.C., passed away in 1973. Elizabeth died in 2009 at age 95. They were immensely proud of the accomplishments of their children and eleven grandchildren.