James Fisk was an undisciplined soldier and a pretty wild frontiersman. He had many adventures between the time he reached Fort Benton in 1862 and got back to Washington before his 1863 trip. He and his men were accused of being drunk, disorderly and chasing after the wives and daughters of the stagecoach station masters along the way.

One commander wrote that Captain Fisk and his men were drunk, took complete possession of every station they visited, turned company mules out into the storm and put their own horses into the stables. They took eight hams for their own use and they and their horses consumed eighty-six meals, seventy-five bushels of corn and five tons of hay, wasting fully as much of the last as they used and they committed other smaller depredations. He said that Fisk had "grossly insulted the wives and families of several company agents."

He had pretty much ignored the $5,000 allotment he had been given for expenses. He would routinely write checks on behalf of the federal government and ask the recipients to hold them for a few months and then just send them to Washington and somebody up there would take care of them. Sometimes the government honored these promissory notes and sometimes not.

Papers in Washington D.C. were served against him, but the papers were never delivered when a clerk mistakenly sent them to San Francisco thinking they would probably just get forwarded as needed. His defense to some of these claims were that no living man had ever seen him 'drunk' or rendered unfit for responsible duty by the use of intoxicating liquors. He said that they were most particular "not to waste a mouthful of food, a spear of hay or a kernel of corn" while stopping at the stations. He said that even if a quarter of the charges against him were true that they would have been "gluttons on elephants and none of them could have survived the trip.

He said that everyone knew that not a drop of spirits was allowed in any of the stations and where else "in the midst of winter on the wild plains would a party of men have found whiskey?" Many of the station masters along the stage line had already been accused of being "a shelter, receptacle and employer of renegade disloyalists". They weren't supposed to have any alcohol on hand and weren't about to admit that they had all been selling this whiskey to Fisk. He also went on to say that "No wife or daughter would ever be found to perjure herself by confirming such an allegation against Captain Fisk!"

He spent most of his time between the 1862 and 1863 expeditions in Washington D. C. fighting these charges, other charges for not having a proper pass (Washington D. C. was under tight security at this time), not reporting to military headquarters, not following other military procedures and from banks that were left holding some of his worthless notes. A performance review from one of his commanders said that he was "too reckless and too ignorant to be trusted." Nevertheless, during that time the Minnesota delegation secured $10,000 for him and his 1863 Expedition.