Because of the 1862 "Paroxysm of Rage" Indian uprisings in which over 600 white civilians were killed (See Part I of Mark Sundlov's Sibley series in the July 12th Courier), Fisk was only able to gather 62 people for the 1863 Expedition and many of these were men on his own payroll. In spite of the small number of people, his backers did not want him to call off the expedition because such action would imply a fear of the Indians or a lack of confidence in the route.

His journal this time says of Lake Jessie that they found shale out-crops at the edge of the lake and one of their party discovered coal. He said that both of these lakes (Lake Jessie and Lake Addie) were both very beautiful, surrounded by bold bluffs and well timbered. He went on to say that "In the woods at the back of camp we heard an incessant noise of birds, and we found the trees full of nests; it was a perfect rookery; there were cranes, crows, gulls, storks, shite-pokes etc. They were camped just a few miles away from the forces that General Sibley had left at Camp Atchison and he was very pleased when Sibley's officers invited him and some of his men to dine with them.

The most infamous incident of his expeditions was when some of his men and/or some of the emigrants (accounts differ) left strychnine-injected hardtack behind for the Indians that were following them. The Indians are referred to as either a starving and struggling band or as a war party, depending on the author's point of view.

The New York Times called it an atrocious act of barbarity and said that 100 men, women and children had been killed from the poison. Fisk was completely unapologetic and said that his "unwarlike means of destruction" had saved his "weak and beleaguered party," and when he had discovered what was done, he said, "I was glad 'twas WELL done!" The St. Paul Pioneer commended Fisk's "fearless frankness" and said that the eastern newspapers concepts of Indians came from popular romances that would sympathize with the savages, but men of the West "will not be apt to denounce their own race for exercising the instincts of self-preservation against bloodthirsty, remorseless foes, who never practice and cannot be made to understand, the theory of civilized warfare."

Fisk was often referred to as a propagandist for his unswerving opinions about the northern route. After he received his discharge he could have gone straight to Minnesota but the temptation to speak and propagandize was too strong, and he accepted an invitation to address the Traveler's Club in New York on June 23. When Fisk and his family finally departed from the Union Hotel, they left behind an unpaid debt of $850 incurred during their stay. His disregard of honoring bills or budgets never varied much.

Fisk had both good and bad qualities, but he was so obsessed with the rightness of his cause and inflexible in his views that his actions probably made him more enemies than friends.

Northern Overland Wagon Trains of the 1860's by Helen McCann White was the source for much of this information.