



The Murder of Jim Fisk for the Love of Josie Mansfield: A Tragedy of the Gilded Age

H.W. Brands

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Even before he was shot dead on the stairway of the tony Grand Central Hotel in 1872, financier James “Jubilee Jim” Fisk, Jr., was a notorious New York City figure. From his audacious attempt to corner the gold market in 1869 to his battle for control of the geographically crucial Erie Railroad, Fisk was a flamboyant exemplar of a new financial era marked by volatile fortunes and unprecedented greed and corruption. But it was his scandalously open affair with a showgirl named Josie Mansfield that ultimately led to his demise.

In this riveting short history—the first in his American Portraits series—H. W. Brands traces Fisk’s extraordinary downfall, bringing to life New York’s Gilded Age and some of its legendary players, including Boss William Tweed, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and the railroad tycoon Jay Gould.

The Murder of Jim Fisk for the Love of Josie Mansfield: A Tragedy of the Gilded Age Details

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From Reader Review The Murder of Jim Fisk for the Love of Josie Mansfield: A Tragedy of the Gilded Age for online ebook

Barb says

This scandalous story was told using language common to its time, the 1860's-1870's, which made it less interesting for me than I thought it would be. I do not regret having read it, especially since it's quite short. The most interesting points relate to the power brokers of the time including Vanderbilt.

Robert says

This is a great book. Whenever an author can transport you to a bygone time and insert you into it, then that is a great start. H.W. Brands is a great historian and this is a great book. He chronicles the murder of Jim Fisk, who was for his time of the richest and most powerful men in the post-civil war United States.

The book is enjoyable, read well, and is well worth anyone's time.

Penny says

The first half of the book was a really quick read, but the part for the trial seemed to bog down a bit. I don't regret any of the time I spent on it though.

Katherine Addison says

Well-written and entertaining "popular history" account of the murder of Jim Fisk by the lover of one of his former mistresses. Not the place to go for in-depth analysis of anything, but gives a good portrait of the Gilded Age.

Plantgrrl says

This book reads quickly and has a good way of making the storyline flow together as you will find in the best historical narratives (like "Seabiscuit" or "A Perfect Storm"). It does an excellent job of describing the persons involved and their motivations without delving into the quagmire of speculation too much or getting bogged down in the minutia of the case and case laws. Excellent.

Kate says

Note for self: Eh, ok, did a decent job running through what happened to a Gilded Age player who got

dumped by his "girl" and murdered by her new man.

Didn't much care about any of the characters, which took away some of my interest.

Zach says

Very interesting, concise book about a now, lesser known scandal.

The book not only describes the death of the robber baron Jim Fisk and Fisk's career as a high profile speculator in the gold market and his battles with Cornelius Vanderbilt over the Erie railroad, but also it describes a changed America following the Civil War, much of which stays with us today from economic speculation to the movement from subsistence farming to everything depending on industrialization (panic of 1873 having an impact on farmers via commodities prices) to how the wealthy attempt to navigate the justice system.

Chris Doelle says

This was much better than I expected - an enthralling story. Full review -->
<http://www.ridingwiththewindowdown.co...>

Calvin says

Fascinating and well told story

Angela says

Boring. This book was boring. The author does not bring any depth to any of the main figures in the book. Josie Mansfield is hardly a presence in this story. Jubilee Jim Fisk was a larger than life part of New York's gilded age, but that's lost in this book.

Nightwitch says

Written in the present tense and structured like a true crime narrative rather than a work of history, this book was a fairly easy read but bogged down considerably towards the end, which was essentially a present-tense recap of various court proceedings. *And then this person testified, and they said that, tearfully.* It's less than compelling. I really enjoy when these kinds of books have historical background - and this certainly had some, but some of it definitely seemed like a teaser for the author's other, more complete book on the history of the era. As other reviewers have said, this was kind of a historical footnote, which got inflated into a full book. Brands didn't seem interested in pursuing other avenues, either - was Jim Fisk really killed "for love of Josie" or was that the tabloid gloss, for example? Was it possible that Josie and her lover genuinely believed

that Fisk meant them harm? There's almost not *enough* speculation, because it's stuck on being a straight historical fact. Similarly, I'd have been interested to know how much of the endless court cycle was common for the era. Were they still "hanging 'em high" all the time or was there genuine concern over sentencing someone to death? What was going *on*? I don't feel like I really know, or that Brands was interested in investigating.

John O'reilly says

Breezy and unusual tale of robber barons in the 1870s. Written almost as a newspaper style recount of a tawdry affair, murder of passion, and scandalous trial, Brands creates an entertaining and quick read.

He is a very good writer and this is a vignette worthy of a read for social historians.

Janet says

This is the kind of book that makes a reader pick up the TV remote.

Subtitled A Tragedy of the Gilded Age the only real tragedy is that it resulted in this book. A clumsy retelling of the murder of Jim Fisk, railroad magnate and thug plumped up like a Thanksgiving Butterball with conjecture and hearsay. Josie Mansfield, his discarded mistress, provides color but it is in nonsensical bookended chapters. H.W. Brands took a fairly obscure historical footnote and stretched it over 200 pages - at best this is a two paragraph story on a slow news day.

KC says

The cover and title intrigued me, so I picked this book up at the library. I'd never heard of Jim Fisk or Josie Mansfield, but I enjoy reading about the Gilded Age and true crime stories interest me...

Fisk was a wealthy financier who was notorious for shady dealings in the stock market and other ventures. Josie was his mistress -- until she met someone else.

I liked Brands' writing style--he introduces the major players and describes their financial and political dealings, personalities, and relationships in a relaxed, conversational way without lingering on some areas overlong like some other authors do. I would like to try reading some of his other history books.

Jeramey says

Really enjoyed it, but I knew who Jim Fisk was going into the book. I would think if you have some vague

idea of who he was, you'll enjoy this book. I could have used a bit more on his relationships with Gould, Tweed, Vanderbilt, and Tweed.

Fun quick history read on the Gilded Age in New York.
