In the 1940s, a young cowboy named Waldo Wilcox stumbled upon an ancient treasure in a remote area in Utah called Range Creek Canyon.

He found an elegant woven basket of grass and willow in an old stone-walled house. When he looked around some more, the young cowpoke couldn’t believe his eyes. Pottery, weapons, and other ancient houses dotted the area.

"I thought, this stuff has got to be protected," he told The Washington Post. Wilcox was afraid that if word got out about his discovery, tourists, collectors, and vandals would ravage the site, as they had done other ancient sites of the Southwest.

So Wilcox protected the 4,200-acre area the best way he knew how: He didn't tell a soul. He even bought the land in 1951 to raise cattle. He and his family went to great lengths to keep the secret. They even built gates to keep people out.

When Wilcox decided to sell his land, he wanted to make sure that whoever bought the property would preserve the site. To do that, he sold the ranch to a local preservation group. The group then transferred the land to the state of Utah.
Scientists came to know that the site was littered with historic relics. Once Wilcox's secret was out of the bag, they began visiting the remote canyon. Scientists hoped to unravel the mysteries of an ancient Native American culture that had roamed Utah thousands of years ago. Those Native Americans were called the Fremont people.

**Meet the Fremont**

The Fremont were hunter-gatherers and farmers who inhabited the high-desert Book Cliffs in present-day Utah from about A.D. 500 to 1300.

In the canyon, the ruins of small villages are spread out along a 12-mile stretch of Range Creek, about two hours southeast of Salt Lake City.

"We've documented about 225 sites, and it's just scratching the surface," said Kevin Jones, a state of Utah archaeologist.

Almost all the sites include granaries, beehive-shaped storehouses for grain. Some granaries are the size of cupboards. Others are several yards across. Many of the granaries are perfectly preserved. Some were still filled with grass seed and corn--just the way the Fremont had left them.

Archaeologists also found granaries on cliff ledges. They suspect the Fremont put the granaries there to protect the food supply from rodents and raiders. Scientists say the granaries are evidence that the Fremont moved from place to place, leaving stashes of food at each stop.
Arrowheads, pottery fragments, and other artifacts lie on the ground at other village sites. Most of the homes are intact too, although the roofs of the houses in which the Fremont people lived collapsed long ago. The dwellings were once "warm and snug in the winter and cool in the summer," Jones said.

**Where Did They Go?**

Scientists say the Fremont people disappeared about 800 years ago. No one knows exactly why. Jones guesses they might have starved to death or joined other tribes.

Archaeologists have been learning more about the Fremont by studying the ruins and artifacts at Range Creek Canyon. Scientists say if Waldo Wilcox had not kept his mouth shut all these years, the ruins would have been ransacked.

"I was cussed all my life for locking those gates," Wilcox told a reporter. "Now the archaeologists tell me we were heroes for doing that."
1. According to the passage, when did Waldo Wilcox first find Range Creek Canyon?
   A 1950s  
   B 1840s  
   C 1940s  
   D 1330s

2. According to the passage’s description, which of the following items did archeologists NOT find at Range Creek?
   A granaries with seed and corn  
   B arrowheads and pottery  
   C homes that people lived in  
   D bones of ancient animals

3. Why did Wilcox most likely sell his land to a local preservation group?
   A He was good friends with the people in the preservation group.  
   B He believed the local preservation group would protect the land.  
   C The local preservation group offered him a fair price.  
   D The local preservation group had done him a favor.

4. Read the following sentence, and answer the question below: “Wilcox was afraid that if word got out about his discovery, tourists, collectors, and vandals would ravage the site.”
   As used in this sentence, **ravage** means
   A to visit  
   B to respect  
   C to damage  
   D to photograph

5. What is this passage mostly about?
   A how one man helped preserve ancient villages in Range Creek Canyon  
   B how one man bought land in an ancient village of Fremont  
   C how to raise cattle on a farm  
   D the story of the cowboy Waldo Wilcox’s life
6. What are three ways Wilcox helped protect Range Creek Canyon?
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

7. According to the passage, did the Fremont people only eat the food they farmed? Why or why not?
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

8. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

The Fremont were hunter-gatherers and farmers who inhabited the Book Cliffs in present-day Utah. _________, they disappeared about 800 years ago.

A However  
B Thus  
C On the other hand  
D After

9. Answer the questions based on the sentence below.

Waldo Wilcox wanted to protect the ancient ruins in Range Creek because he was worried that vandals would destroy it.

Who? Waldo Wilcox

What? ___________________________________________________________________________

Where? __________________________________________________________________________

Why? ____________________________________________________________________________
10. Read the vocabulary word and definition below and complete questions 10a, 10b, and 11.

**Vocabulary Word:** preserve (pre · serve): to make it last.

10a. Read the five sentences below and underline the word **preserve** in each sentence.

1. Museums don’t allow people to touch important artifacts in order to preserve them for many years.

2. Wilcox helped preserve the Fremont artifacts from thieves who might steal them from the site.

3. In order to preserve your teeth, make sure you brush them often, so they don’t get cavities.

4. You can help preserve the environment by not littering when you visit national parks.

5. We had more strawberries than we could eat, so we preserved them by making them into jam to eat in the winter.

10b. What is something that needs to be preserved?

11. What are some ways in which museum visitors can help preserve ancient artifacts when they visit?

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