

U.S. Town OKs Church Takeover, Solzhenitsyn Exhibit

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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CAVENDISH, Vermont — Residents of a small town that was the home of exiled Soviet dissident author Alexander Solzhenitsyn for nearly two decades decided to create an exhibit honoring him.

About 70 voters at Monday night's Town Meeting in Cavendish overwhelmingly decided that the town should take over a historic stone church to house the exhibit for the Nobel literature laureate.

Preservationists will examine the church, particularly its roof, in the spring, once all the snow has melted, and the exhibit should be ready by next year, Cavendish Historical Society coordinator Margo Caulfield said. The church will likely need minor repairs and cosmetic work, but events should be able to be held there almost immediately, she said.

Solzhenitsyn lived in Cavendish from 1977 to 1994 and died in Russia in 2008. His house

in Cavendish is still lived in by his son, pianist and conductor Ignat Solzhenitsyn, and his family.

The Town Meeting, residents' annual decision-making gathering, was the venue where Solzhenitsyn addressed his new neighbors when he arrived in Cavendish.

Solzhenitsyn, who had spent eight years in prison and labor camps for criticizing Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, said he chose Cavendish for its resemblance to his homeland and its small-town personality.

"I like very much the simple way of life and the population here, the simplicity and the human relationship," he said then. "I like the countryside, and I like the climate with the long winter and the snow, which reminds me of Russia."

Solzhenitsyn wrote his best-known works, "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" and "The Gulag Archipelago," based on his years imprisoned, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970.

The exhibit is planned to include videos of Solzhenitsyn talking about his years in Cavendish. The impetus for the project came last summer when the town had little to offer a group of Russian tourists, who expected a monument in their countryman's honor, Caulfield said.

The church that will be used for the exhibit was built in 1844 under the leadership of renowned abolitionist the Rev. Warren Skinner and was decommissioned in the 1960s. Church leaders offered to donate it to the town of 1,300 residents last year.

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