Between the eighteenth and twenty-fifth years this becomes ossified, ossification commencing above and extending downward.

The **anterior surface** of the body (Fig. 146) presents, in the middle line, a vertical crest, the **sphenoidal crest**, which articulates with the perpendicular plate of the ethmoid, and forms part of the septum of the nose. On either side of the crest is an irregular opening leading into the corresponding **sphenoidal air sinus**. These sinuses are two large, irregular cavities hollowed out of the interior of the body of the bone, and separated from one another by a bony septum, which is commonly bent to one or the other side. They vary considerably in form and size,[1] are seldom symmetrical, and are often partially subdivided by irregular bony laminæ. Occasionally, they extend into the basilar part of the occipital nearly as far as the foramen magnum. They begin to be developed before birth, and are of a considerable size by the age of six. They are partially closed, in front and below, by two thin, curved plates of bone, the **sphenoidal conchæ** (see page 152), leaving in the articulated skull a round opening at the upper part of each sinus by which it com-

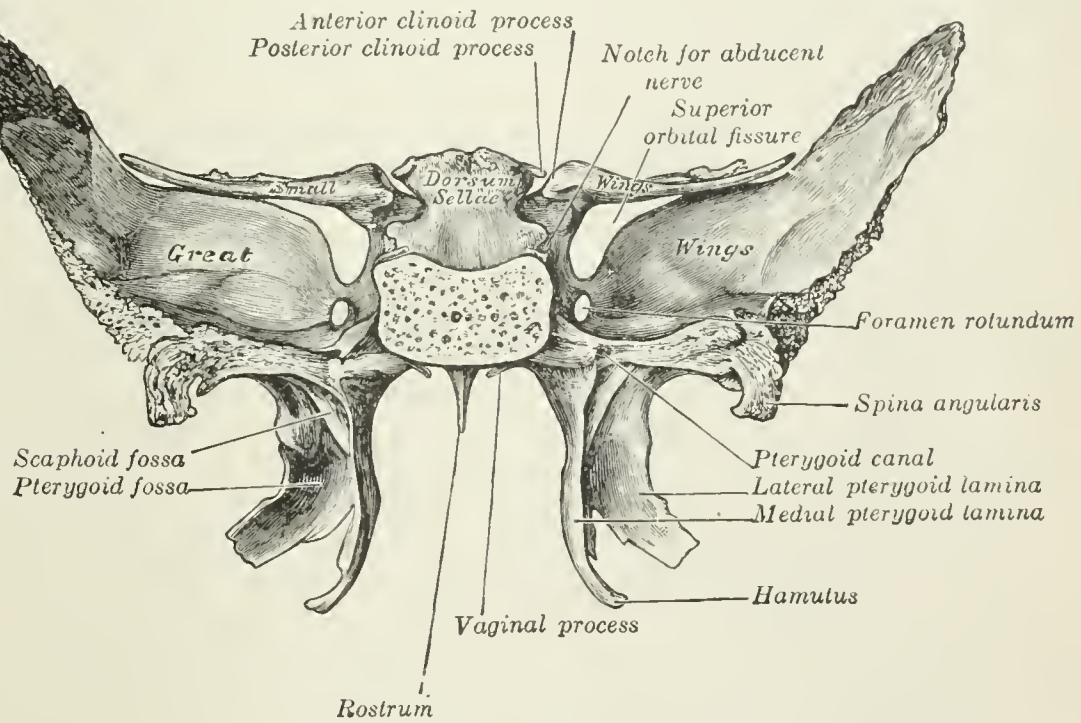

FIG. 147.—Sphenoid bone. Upper and posterior surfaces.

municates with the upper and back part of the nasal cavity and occasionally with the posterior ethmoidal air cells. The lateral margin of the anterior surface is serrated, and articulates with the lamina papyracea of the ethmoid, completing the posterior ethmoidal cells; the lower margin articulates with the orbital process of the palatine bone, and the upper with the orbital plate of the frontal bone.

The **inferior surface** presents, in the middle line, a triangular spine, the **sphenoidal rostrum**, which is continuous with the sphenoidal crest on the anterior surface, and is received in a deep fissure between the alæ of the vomer. On either side of the rostrum is a projecting lamina, the **vaginal process**, directed medialward from the base of the medial pterygoid plate, with which it will be described.

The Great Wings (*alæ magnæ*).—The great wings, or **ali-sphenoids**, are two strong processes of bone, which arise from the sides of the body, and are curved upward, lateralward, and backward; the posterior part of each projects as a triangular process which fits into the angle between the squama and the petrous

[1] Aldren Turner (*op. cit.*) gives the following as their average measurements: vertical height, 7/8 inch: antero-posterior depth, 7/8 inch; transverse breadth, 3/4 inch.